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ABSTRACT

This guide for parents of children with disabilities in Florida is intended to answer common questions about the exceptional student education program. The first chapter provides an overview of exceptional student education including laws about the education of children with disabilities, parents' records, planning a child's education, continuing a child's education, placement, and the least restrictive environment. Chapter 2 focuses on the individualized education program (IEP), what it is, what it is not, its uses, its contents, information needed to write IEPs, IEP meetings, beginning special services, IEP review meetings, the matrix of services, and how parents can help. Chapter 3 is about planning for transition to post-school life. It considers the importance of student and family involvement, differences in the transition IEP meeting, preparation for the transition IEP meeting, contents of the transition IEP, transition team work, choosing a diploma option, and getting a head start on transition. Chapter 4 addresses problem resolution in discussion of procedural safeguards, problem solving steps, mediation, the due process hearing, the independent evaluation, discipline of children with disabilities, and school records. The final chapter identifies resources. It provides a parents' dictionary and lists of reading materials, a directory of agency resources, and sample letters. (Contains 27 references.) (DB)

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FOR PARENTS OF FLORIDA'S STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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AN INTRODUCTION TO EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

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FOR PARENTS OF FLORIDA'S
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

AN INTRODUCTION TO EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

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WELCOME

Most parents have many questions...

This book is for parents of children in Florida who have ***disabilities***. The word "parents" includes anyone who has major responsibility for a child. If you are a person who has such responsibility—for example, a parent, grandparent, surrogate parent, or foster parent—and you think your child has a disability, you will want to read this book carefully. It will help you understand your child's right to an education.

Most parents have many questions about their child's education. You may wonder what will happen to your child. You may feel that you need help in understanding and working with your child and your child's school. The five chapters of this book will answer some of your questions. The chapters are described on the next page. But before you read this book, there are several things you should know.

- You do not need to read the whole book at one time. Check the table of contents on the first page of each chapter to find the parts you want to read.
- Check the Parents' Dictionary that begins on page 129 to learn the meaning of the underlined words.
- The information given in this book is true for any child with a disability, beginning on the child's *third birthday* and continuing until the student's *22nd birthday* or until the student *graduates from high school with a standard diploma*, whichever comes first. For information on services for children with special needs who are ages birth to two years, see ***For Parents of Florida's Infants and Toddlers: Early Intervention Services for Your Young Child with Special Needs*** (available from the address listed on the inside front cover of this book).
- It is very helpful for you to keep some records of your own. In the separate book ***Parents' Educational Records*** you will find parents' record pages that will give you ideas about information to keep in your records. On those pages you can record information that is important for your child's education. **Chapters 1, 2, 3,** and **4** of this book refer you to particular parents' record pages in that separate booklet. To get a copy of ***Parents' Educational Records***, ask your local school district office or contact the Clearinghouse Information Center at the address listed on the inside cover of this book.

We hope this book will help you to help your child. As you read and use the chapters, you may have more questions. The people at your child's school or in your local school district office will be happy to work with you and to answer your questions.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY EACH CHAPTER

Chapter 1, ***EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION***, will answer questions such as these:

- How will the school work with my child?
- What is exceptional student education?
- What can I do to help?
- Is my child too young or too old to receive special services?
- Is this going to cost me a lot of money?

Chapter 2, ***THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN—IEP***, will answer questions such as these:

- What is an IEP?
- What are the parts of an IEP?
- How will an IEP help my child succeed in school?
- Who writes the IEP?
- When and how is an IEP written?
- How can I help to write the IEP?

Chapter 3, ***PLANNING FOR TRANSITION TO POST-SCHOOL LIFE***, will answer questions such as these:

- How will the school help my child move into adult life?
- What are transition services?
- How can my child and I participate in transition planning?
- What's different about the Transition IEP?
- How does the IEP help my child prepare for the move from school to a job, postsecondary education, and other aspects of adult life.
- Will my child receive a diploma?
- How can we get an early start on transition?

Chapter 4, ***SOLVING PROBLEMS***, will answer questions such as these:

- What are my rights to participate, have notice, and give consent?
- How can I work with the school to solve problems?
- What should I do if I disagree with something the school is doing?
- What is mediation and when is it available?
- What are my procedural safeguards?
- When my child legally becomes an adult, do these rights transfer to my child?

Chapter 5, *RESOURCES*, contains this useful information:

- Parents' Dictionary explains the meaning of some of the words used by schools to describe your child and your child's education, and gives meanings of all underlined words in this book.
- Reading Materials for Parents is a list of other materials that may be of help to you.
- Where to Go for Help lists some groups and agencies that can give you more information.
- Sample Letters gives ideas about how to ask the school to do certain things.

1.
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

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EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION AND YOUR CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

You will want to work closely with people at your child's school...

You may be reading this book because someone thinks your child has special needs. This person could be you, a doctor, a teacher, or a friend. Perhaps you already know that your child has a ***disability***. (Other words for disability are *handicap* and *impairment.*)

There are many clues that can tell you that your son or daughter may need extra help and attention. For example, your child may

- talk differently than other children do
- learn differently than other children do
- be too active or not active enough
- act bored or lazy
- learn slowly
- not get along well with others
- have health problems
- walk or move in a clumsy way
- have problems seeing, hearing, or communicating with others

You may be concerned about these or other signs of special needs. A special need can make it difficult for your child to succeed in school. So, you will want to work closely with people at your child's school to make sure your child is getting the education he or she needs.

In Florida, boys and girls who have special learning needs because of a disability are called ***exceptional students***. The special help they are given at school is called ***exceptional student education***. This is often called ***ESE***. Sometimes it is called ***special***

education. The purpose of exceptional student education is to *help your child progress in school, meet his or her goals, and prepare for life after school.*

The laws of the United States say that each child with a disability is entitled to a ***free appropriate public education***. However, it is up to local school districts to provide that education, and most decisions about ESE services are made by the school, the school district, and the local community. The job of the state government and Florida's Department of Education is to help school districts, schools, and families provide an education for all children. The Florida Department of Education also helps school districts understand and follow the laws and in some cases decides how to resolve complaints filed by parents about the education of children with disabilities.

To receive ESE services in Florida, your child must be ***eligible*** for at least one of the ***exceptionality*** categories listed below. (These are often called "programs.)

- ***Autistic***
- ***Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing***
- ***Developmentally Delayed***
  (birth to age five only)
- ***Dual-Sensory Impaired*** (Deaf-Blind)
- ***Emotionally Handicapped*** (Emotionally Handicapped and Severely Emotionally Disturbed)
- ***Homebound or Hospitalized***
- ***Mentally Handicapped*** (Educable, Trainable, and Profound)
- ***Physically Impaired*** (Orthopedically Impaired, Other Health Impaired, Traumatic Brain Injured)
- ***Specific Learning Disabilities***
- ***Speech and Language Impaired***
- ***Visually Impaired*** (Blind and Partially Sighted)
- ***Gifted***

(**Note**: A child who learns very easily may be called gifted. In Florida, ESE services are also available for children who are gifted. However, this book does not talk about services for children who are gifted. If you think your child needs services for gifted children, contact the address on the inside front cover of this book or your local school district for information.)

The eligibility criteria for each of the exceptionality categories listed above are outlined in Florida's laws and rules. You will find definitions of each of these exceptionalities in the Parents' Dictionary beginning on page 129.

Some children who are eligible to receive services in the categories above also need other help, such as ***physical therapy*** and ***occupational therapy***.

Some children have one disability; others have more than one. A child who has a mild disability may only need a little extra help. Another child may need more services because his or her learning needs are more intense. Some children will need ESE services for only a short time. Others will need help all through their school years—or for the rest of their lives.

Likewise, not all children with the same disability have the same needs or require the same services. Exceptional student education provides services designed to give each child the right kind of special help for that child.

ESE services, including special transportation, if appropriate, will be provided at no cost to you.

Explained below are some important parts of exceptional student education.

Teachers—Your child may work with *general education* teachers, or with ESE teachers, or with both. ESE teachers have special training and skills in working with children with disabilities. ESE teachers can also help general education teachers work with children with disabilities.

Individualized Instruction—Teachers will use special strategies selected to help your child learn.

Related Services—*Related services* are special kinds of help your child may receive in addition to classroom teaching. Your child may not need any related services, or your child may need several of these services. Here are some examples of related services:

- *orientation and mobility services*
- transportation
- interpreters for the deaf
- student counseling
- evaluation services
- parent counseling or training
- social services
- *assistive technology services*
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- nursing services

Accommodations and Modifications—*Accommodations* are changes in *how* a child is taught or tested. Examples of accommodations include using books-on-tape, having extra time to complete tests, and using a behavior contract. *Modifications* are changes in *what* a child is expected to learn. Modifications include working on below-grade-level curriculum, completing only some of a course's requirements, and taking other tests instead of the statewide tests taken by most students.

Materials and Equipment—Many of the materials the teachers will use with your child are the same as those used with other children. But the teachers may also use some special books, kits, learning games, or equipment.

Subjects—Many children will study the same subjects other children do, such as reading and math. Some children will also learn other things—skills that will help them in everyday life, such as grocery shopping getting dressed alone. Every child will get some kind of physical education.

Other Activities—No child should be kept out of school activities just because of his or her disability. Your child has the same right to be in sports, music activities, or clubs as any other child.

Assessment—***Assessments*** are tests designed to find out what children know and can do. Some assessments are done in the classroom, while others are given to all the children in the school district, or even across the whole state. Assessment is important because it helps teachers and parents know what a child has learned and what he or she still needs to learn.

Many children with disabilities take the same tests in the same ways that other children do. However, some children with disabilities need changes in the testing situation, such as having the test questions read to them or taking the test in small parts instead of all at one time. Some children need other ways to show what they have learned and may be given different tests.

Building—No matter what kind of disability a child has, he or she should be in a building that meets his or her special needs. The building should be safe. It should be arranged so that each child can move around easily. It should allow all students to get to every part of the building—gym, library, bathroom, cafeteria—that they need to use.

Vocational or Career Training—Students may have some kind of ***vocational*** or career training. This training may occur in general vocational classes or in special vocational classes.

Transition Services—Students with disabilities who are ages 14 to 21 often need help in making the transition from high school to adult activities. These activities may be working at a job, going on to ***postsecondary education***, or participating in community living alternatives. The student, along with parents, teachers, and other staff from both the school and outside agencies, will identify the ***transition services*** and assistive technology the student needs as he or she moves into adult life. These services may be provided by the school and other agencies.

LAWS ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Parents should help to decide what is best for their child...

There are several important federal and state laws about education for children with disabilities. The laws help to make sure that each child with a disability gets the education services the child needs. The laws also say that parents should help to decide what is best for their child.

The most important thing to remember is that every child with a disability has the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This means that the local public school district must provide services designed to allow your child to meet his or her annual goals and make progress in the general curriculum. It does not mean that the school has to provide the *best* possible services for your child.

If your child has a disability, lives in Florida, is at least three years old and less than 22 years old, meets ***eligibility criteria***, and has not yet graduated from high school with a ***standard diploma*** or ***General Educational Development (GED) diploma***, he or she is entitled to receive special educational services from your local public school district.

If your child is eligible for ESE programs and services, this means several things.

- Decisions about your child must be made after an individual ***evaluation***.
- Decisions about your child must be made *with* you.
- The services for your child must be described in writing. This written description is called an ***individual educational plan***, or ***IEP***. For children ages birth through two years, a ***family support plan***, or ***FSP***, is written. For children ages three through five years, an FSP *or* an IEP may be written.
- The services may include special teaching methods, materials, technology, testing, and other help.
- The services must be set up to meet your child's unique needs.
- The services must be free of charge to you.

Note: If your child goes to a private school and has special needs, the public school district will evaluate your child if you give your ***consent***. Your child may be able to get some services from the public school system. Call the ESE administrator in your local school district office to find out about this.

The laws and rules that apply to the education of children with disabilities are described in several places in this book. Here are the names of the most important laws and rules.

- ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)***—Public Law 105-17, first called the Education of the Handicapped Act. Most recently amended in 1997, it includes
  - **— Public Law 94-142—Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975**
  - **— Public Law 99-457—Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986**
- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**
- **Americans with Disabilities Act**
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**
- **Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules** pertaining to education for exceptional students
- **Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students** (Each local school system has a set.)

Chapter 5 tells how you can get copies of the laws and rules.

In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was changed in several important ways. This new version of the law is often called IDEA '97. Here are some important changes.

- School districts must get the written consent of parents before doing tests or other evaluation activities as part of a ***reevaluation*** of a child, not just before the initial individual evaluation.
- Attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have been added to the list of conditions that *may* make a child ***eligible*** for ESE services. The child must still meet the requirements for one of the special programs listed on page 8.
- The right of a child with a disability to a free appropriate public education ends upon graduation with a standard diploma (or GED diploma) or upon the student's 22nd birthday, whichever comes first. This right does not end with any other type of graduation certificate or diploma, until the child reaches the age of 22.
- Parents must be given a free copy of their child's IEP without having to ask for it.
- The IEP team must consider several special factors: behavior that impedes learning, limited English proficiency, braille needs, communication needs, and assistive technology needs.

- The IEP team must include at least one ***general education*** teacher if the child is, or may be, participating in the general education environment.
- The IEP team must consider, as appropriate, the child's performance on state- or districtwide assessments.
- Invitations to IEP meetings must inform parents of their right to invite individuals who have with special expertise or knowledge regarding their child.
- Transition planning must begin at age 14.
- Several changes have been made to the conditions under which children with disabilities may be suspended or otherwise removed from school for disciplinary reasons.
- Due process rights and ***procedural safeguards*** transfer from the parent to the student when the student reaches the ***age of majority*** (18 years of age in Florida)—unless the student has been determined to be incompetent by a court of law.

This book does not include all the information that relates to these changes. If you have questions that are not answered in this book, contact your child's teacher or principal, or the ***ESE administrator*** in your local school district office.

PARENTS' RECORDS

Good records will be helpful to you and to your child's school...

You can help yourself, your child, and the school by keeping your own records. This will make going to meetings and talking to school people much easier for you. It will also be helpful if you ever move to another county or state. You will want to keep

- test results and reports
- the written educational plan for your child—either an IEP or an FSP
- report cards
- samples of your child's work
- evaluation reports
- letters from the school to you
- consent forms the school has asked you to sign
- records or reports from doctors or other people from outside the school who have worked with your child
- letters or information from agencies such as the Florida Department of Education or the Florida Department of Children and Families
- letters or notes from you to the school
- notes and dates of telephone calls, meetings, and visits

Sometimes important decisions are made during a telephone conversation or when you are talking in person with someone at the school. If this happens, it will be helpful if you write a short note to the school, clearly stating your understanding of what the decision was. This will give you a record of what happened. It will also let people at the school know what you expect of them. Letters or notes like this do not need to be typed. However, you should keep a copy. On the next page is an example of this kind of note.

February 10, 20__

Dear _________

When I talked with you on February 7, 20__, we agreed that my son John will be allowed to join the Sports Club that meets every Wednesday after school. I understand that this will start next week. Please let me know if there is any problem with this.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ms. Smith

In the separate booklet ***Parents' Educational Records***, you will find parents' record pages. They will give you ideas about information you should keep. You may want to write all important information in that booklet. You may want to keep all your records in a notebook or a file.

Some parents like to make a tape recording of important meetings so they do not have to take so many notes. If you would like to tape record a meeting, talk to the people at the school about it well before the meeting date.

Children who are eligible for ESE services in one Florida school district are also eligible for ESE services in any other Florida school district the family might move to. However, if you move, you should do several things:

- Tell your child's old school where you are moving and ask them to contact the new school right away.
- Make sure all your child's records are sent to the new school.
- Contact the new school as soon as possible and tell school staff about the special needs your child has and any special technology your child uses.
- Take copies of your child's important school records with you to the new school.

Keeping your own records and copies of school records takes time. However, good records will be helpful to you and to your child's school.

PLANNING YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Several things must happen before your child can receive special services...

You are part of the process of planning and delivering special services for your child. During this process, you will want to work with the school by giving information, asking questions, making suggestions, and helping to make decisions.

The first part of the process involves deciding which special services your child needs and how those services will be provided. Several things must happen *before* your child can receive ESE services:

1. Referral for individual evaluation
2. Individual evaluation
3. Eligibility determination
4. Development of the first IEP
5. Consent for placement

These actions are described on the following pages. Keep in mind that each school district may have a slightly different way of carrying out this process. (For information on your rights during each part of the process, see **chapter 4**.)

1. REFERRAL FOR INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

A ***referral*** is a request for an individual evaluation of a child who is suspected of needing special education services. Some children are referred for individual evaluation because they have an obvious disability or because they do not do well on group tests called ***screenings***—such as vision or hearing tests given to all students who are in a particular grade in school.

However, when a child is having difficulty in school, several kinds of help are usually tried *before* a formal referral for an individual evaluation is made. For example, if your child is having difficulty, the classroom teacher will try to help your child be more successful. You and the teacher may also meet to try to solve the problem. Then, if the situation does not improve, you or the teacher may ask for help from the school's ***child study team*** or other school staff. Older students may even ask for help themselves.

The child study team or other school staff will try to help by suggesting *interventions* such as special teaching or behavior management strategies to your child's teacher. You may be asked to attend a meeting or help in other ways.

If the interventions are not successful, you or the school staff will then refer your child for an individual evaluation to determine if he or she needs special education services.

No matter who refers your child for evaluation, you should be told when the referral was made and why. If you make the referral yourself, write down the name of the person you talked to and the date. If you write a letter or note, keep a copy.

See page 3 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

2. INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

An individual evaluation is a way of collecting information about a child's learning needs, strengths, problems, and interests. It is used to make decisions about whether a child has a disability and is eligible for ESE services. No decisions about ESE services can be made until after the individual evaluation is finished and reviewed.

Before your child can be individually evaluated at any time, you must give your written consent. The school staff will ask you to sign a form to show that you agree to have them evaluate your child. The school will tell you, in writing, the following things:

- why the school staff think your child should be evaluated
- any other options the school staff considered and why they did not choose those other options
- how you can get help in understanding the consent form and the evaluation process

The school will also give you a copy of the procedural safeguards, which explains your rights as a parent of a child with a disability.

If you give your consent, your child will be individually evaluated. The people doing the evaluation will try to answer these kinds of questions about your child:

- What does your child do well?
- What does your child know or not know?
- How does your child learn best?
- What learning needs does your child have?
- What behavioral needs does your child have?
- Does your child seem to have a disability?

An evaluation should look at all the areas in which a child may have special needs. It must look at your child in more than one way. Here are some ways to evaluate a child.

- Watch the child work.
- Check on health and *physical* problems.
- Talk with the child.
- Talk with the parents about things the child does at home and what the child was like when he or she was younger.
- Review school progress.
- Give individual tests.
- Try assistive technology devices with the child.

The individual evaluation will be done specifically for your child and must be appropriate for him or her. This means that the evaluation will

- not use just one test
- use tests that are designed for children who are like your child
- not give an false or unfair picture of your child because of his or her race or culture
- be done in your child's own language
- give your child every chance to show what he or she knows and can do

More than one person will help to do the evaluation. Here are some of the people who may do parts of the evaluation:

- teachers
- occupational or physical therapists
- *school psychologists*
- doctors or nurses
- *school social workers*
- *speech-language pathologists*
- audiologists (hearing specialists)
- you, the parent
- assistive technology specialists

You play an important part in the evaluation process. You can help calm any fears your child has about the tests or other evaluations. You can also provide specific information about your child that no one else is likely to have, such as

- your child's medical history
- information about your child's development over the years

- information about how your child does at home in areas such as self-care, communicating with others, doing chores, and doing homework
- information about how your child gets along with adults and other children
- information about your child's interests, skills, and hopes for the future

Evaluation information may also be obtained from other people who have worked with your child. Sometimes the school can use evaluations of your child that have already been done by other schools or agencies. You will be asked to give written permission for this information to be shared with the school.

After the evaluation is finished, the people who worked on it will write one or more reports. You will be provided with a free copy of the reports. You will want to read the reports. You may ask to meet with anyone who was part of the evaluation team. It is often a good idea to ask evaluation team members to explain their findings to you. Be sure to keep copies of evaluation reports in your file.

If school staff decide not to evaluate your child, they will give you a written ***notice*** telling

- why they are not going to evaluate your child (for example, because you and the school have agreed to try interventions first)
- any other options they considered and why they did not choose those other options
- how you can get help in understanding the notice and the evaluation process
- how you can get a copy of your procedural safeguards

You will also get a notice any time the school proposes or refuses to change the identification, evaluation, services, or placement of your child of your child.

See page 4 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

3: ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

After the evaluation is done, the school will invite you to a meeting. This meeting is often called an *eligibility staffing*. The team of people at the meeting—including you—will determine whether your child is eligible for ESE services. A child is only eligible when he or she meets the criteria listed in the *State Board of Education Rules* for ESE. Your child must meet the eligibility criteria for at least one of the special programs listed on page 8 in order to receive ESE services.

Here are some questions that will be answered at this meeting.

- Does your child have a disability that makes him or her eligible for ESE?
- What is your child's disability?
- What special learning needs does your child have because of his or her disability?

- What special behavioral needs does your child have because of his or her disability?
- What assistive technology needs does your child have because of his or her disability?
- Which special programs and related services is your child eligible for?

There must be at least three people from the school or school district at the eligibility staffing meeting. One of these people will be the ESE administrator or another person who can make decisions for the school district. Here are some other people who may be part of the meeting:

- principals
- guidance counselors
- teachers
- people who helped with the evaluation
- speech pathologists
- school psychologists

The school must invite you to the eligibility staffing. It is important for you to get ready for this meeting. Read over any records you have and take them with you to the meeting. You may also want to make notes for yourself and take them along.

You and the rest of the team at the eligibility staffing will discuss the information collected about your child. The team will use the evaluation reports, medical records, school progress reports, test results, referral information, and information you provide to make decisions about your child eligibility for ESE services. The team has four choices.

- Your child is eligible for special services.
- Your child is not eligible for special services and does not need special services.
- Your child is not eligible for special services but does need some help.
- There is not enough information to reach a decision, and more evaluation is needed.

The school must give you a written notice telling you what the team has decided. When you get this notice, be sure you understand it. The notice will give you the name of someone to talk with if you have any questions. If you don't know the meaning of any of the words used in the notice, ask for an explanation. Be sure to keep this notice in your file.

If you do not agree with the decision about your child's eligibility, see **chapter 4** for ideas on how to solve problems.

See pages 5, 6, & 7 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

(Another eligibility staffing meeting may be held later if there is good reason to think your child has become eligible for a *different* ESE program. See the list on page 8.)

4: DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST IEP

An IEP is a plan that tells you, the teachers, and other school staff what ESE services and related services will be provided to your child...

If the team at the eligibility staffing decides that your child has a *disability* and is eligible for ESE services, the next step is to write an individual educational plan (IEP). An IEP is a plan that tells you, the teachers, and other school staff which ESE services will be provided to your child. These services will be designed to meet your child's learning needs.

Here are some things you will want to keep in mind about the IEP.

- The IEP is written at a meeting with you there to help.
- The IEP is a plan for your child only.
- The IEP describes the services your child will receive for one year (or less). A new IEP must be written for your child at least every 12 months.
- Both you and the school have the right to invite anyone you wish to the IEP meeting. However, the people you invite should have knowledge or expertise about your child or technology your child uses.
- When you sign the IEP, it does not mean you agree or disagree with the IEP. It does not mean you give your consent for services to begin. It only means that you attended the IEP meeting.
- If you do not agree with the IEP, you may want to write that on the IEP.
- Your child cannot receive ESE services until the first IEP is done and you give your consent for placement.

You will get a written notice from the school before each ***IEP meeting***. You will be told the day, time, and place suggested for the meeting; who will be there; and why the meeting is being held. Ask the school to change the day, time, or place if you cannot go. Suggest a new date and time if possible. Since the school staff want your help in writing the IEP, they will try to find a day, time, and place that is good for you. However, if you *choose* not to go to the meeting, the school may hold the IEP meeting without you. Learn more by reading **chapter 2** before you go to an IEP meeting.

See pages 10 & 11 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

When you and school staff meet to write the IEP, the team will also decide what kind of classes your child will be in to receive the services on the IEP. This is called your child's ***placement***. Your child cannot receive ESE services for the first time until the IEP is written and you have given your consent for placement.

5: CONSENT FOR PLACEMENT; SERVICES BEGIN

You child may receive special services in the same classroom he or she has been attending...

After the **first** IEP has been written, you will be asked to give your written consent for your child to receive ESE services. The "consent for placement form" will tell what type of classes your child will receive services in and when, how often, and for how long your child will be in each type of class. (You will only be asked for written consent for placement after the meeting to develop the **first** IEP.)

Your child may receive special services in the same classroom he or she has been attending, in a different classroom, or at a different school. The particular type of setting in which your child receives services is called his or her placement. A placement may involve more than one classroom.

The placement decision will be based on the contents of the IEP. Your child will be placed in a school and classroom that offer the services your child needs and that can help him or her meet his or her goals and make progress in the ***general curriculum***. The general curriculum refers to the things that nondisabled students study. In Florida, the general curriculum is built around the ***Sunshine State Standards***.

Most ESE students spend most of their school day in general education classrooms. In some cases, ESE teachers come to the classroom to provide services to the children or to the classroom teacher. In other cases, children leave the general education classroom for part of the day to receive special services in an ESE resource class. A few children spend all day in a special class or in a special school.

Possible placements include the following:

- a general education class for all subjects, with special materials, technology, services, or accommodations
- a general education class for some subjects and a small, special group, called a "resource class," for other subjects
- a special class for some subjects and a general education class for other subjects
- a special class for all subjects
- a special school for the whole day
- a special place to live and go to school
- instruction at home or in a hospital
- instruction in a child care center

Once you have given your consent for placement, services should start right away. Of course the school may need a few days to get everything ready. And you will want to do several things before your child starts receiving ESE services.

- If your child will receive services in a different classroom or in a different school, call the school to arrange a visit for you and your child.
- Talk to your child. Tell your child about the services he or she will receive. If your child's placement is going to change, tell your child about the new teacher or class.
- If your child is going to use assistive technology, learn how to use it. Be sure you know who is going to teach your child to use the technology. Be sure you know who is going to take care of the technology.
- If your child will be riding a different bus, check on the bus schedule.

After your child has started receiving services, you will want to keep in touch with the teachers. Find out if your child is working well and what your child is learning. Visit the class every once in a while. Before you visit, be sure to call the school and let the principal or teacher know that you are coming. Talk with the teachers after your visit. Talk about the good things you saw. If there are problems, you may be able to help the school work them out. If things don't get better, you may ask for changes to be made. If you want to ask for changes, read **chapter 4**.

See pages 12, 13, & 14 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records*.

CONTINUING YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Your child's needs will change as he or she grows and learns new things...

Many parents feel relieved to have that first IEP written and to know that their child is receiving services. It is an achievement to be proud of; however, the work of the team is not over.

During the time when your child receives ESE services, you will be asked to participate in other parts of the ESE process. For example, at least once every 12 months, you and the rest of the team will develop a new IEP for your child. And at least every three years, your child will be evaluated again. Both IEP meetings and reevaluations are designed to help your child's services keep step with the way your child is growing and learning. See **chapter 4** to learn more about your rights during each of these parts of the process.

6. Development of new IEP and IEP review
7. Reevaluation

6: DEVELOPMENT OF NEW IEP AND IEP REVIEW

At least once every 12 months, the IEP team will meet...

At least once every 12 months, you and the rest of the IEP team will meet to talk about your child's progress in school and to develop a new IEP. You will get a written notice about this meeting. If you cannot go, call the school and ask for a different day, time, or place. You will want to get ready for this meeting. Read over your records. Make a list of your questions and suggestions. You might want to visit your child's class and talk to the teacher again. Read **chapter 2** about IEPs before you go to the meeting.

The team may begin by reviewing your child's last IEP and other records to learn what progress your child has made. Based on that information, the team will answer questions like these:

- How have your child's needs changed?
- What new goals should your child be working toward?
- Do transition goals need to be written for your child?
- Does your child need different services or technology?
- Does your child still need all the ESE services he or she has been receiving?
- Does your child need a different placement in order to make progress?
- Could your child make progress in a less restrictive placement?

Then you and the rest of the team will write a new IEP for your child. Sometimes the team will need new evaluation data about your child; sometimes the team will be able to write the new IEP without more evaluation data.

A change in your child's services or placement can only be decided during an IEP meeting (except for some disciplinary reasons). You must be invited to the IEP meeting. However, the school does not need your consent to change your child's services or placement. The school must notify you of a change.

See pages 10 & 11 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

You may ask for an IEP review meeting at any time...

Of course, your child's needs may change at any time. Watch your child carefully. Keep in touch with the people at the school. You, the teacher, or other school staff may ask for an *IEP review* meeting at any time. You do not have to wait until the 12 months are up. If you think parts of the IEP are no longer appropriate or are not working as you and the IEP team had hoped, the team can discuss those concerns in the IEP review meeting and make changes in your child's IEP, as needed. Changes in goals, services, and placement can only made during an IEP meeting.

See page 19 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

Dismissal can only be determined as part of an IEP meeting...

An IEP meeting will also be held if you or the school staff think your child no longer needs ESE services. ***Dismissal*** can only be determined as part of an IEP meeting. After the meeting, the school will send you a written notice if the IEP team has decided to dismiss your child from ESE. You will get this notice before your child stops receiving services. However, the school does not need your consent to dismiss your child from ESE or to make other changes in placement. If you disagree with the decision, read **chapter 4** for information on how you can work with the school.

Even if your child has been dismissed from ESE, you should save your records for future use.

7: REEVALUATION

The school must reevaluate your child at least every three years to find out if he or she still needs ESE services. As part of the ***reevaluation***, the IEP team may decide to give your child tests or use other methods to collect new data about your child. The school must have your written consent before doing this. The consent form will tell you, in writing, the following things:

- why the school staff think your child should be evaluated
- any other options the school staff considered and why they did not choose those other options
- how you can get help in understanding the consent form and the evaluation process

The school will also give you a copy of the procedural safeguards, which explains your rights as a parent of a child with a disability.

After the testing or other evaluation activities, you will receive a free copy of the evaluation report and the results will be explained to you. The results will be used at an IEP meeting, so you will want to review the information before the meeting.

However, the team may decide that no testing or other evaluation activities is needed. The school does not need your consent to *not* give your child any tests as part of reevaluation. However, if you ask the school to retest your child, the school will.

Children may be reevaluated more often than every three years. Here are some reasons for doing a reevaluation before three years have passed.

- Teachers or school staff need more information on how to work with your child.
- You or a teacher has concerns about whether the services your child receives are the ones he or she needs.
- There are questions about whether your child still needs some or all of the ESE services.
- Some children need a medical reevaluation every year.

If you have questions about reevaluation, ask to meet with the principal or with the ESE administrator.

See pages 20 & 21 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

PLACEMENT AND THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Placement will be based on your child's needs...

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says that a child with a disability must have the special help the child needs to make progress in the general curriculum and to achieve his or her annual goals. The law also says the child must get this special help in the ***least restrictive environment (LRE)***. This means that your child with a disability will be educated to the greatest extent possible with nondisabled students.

When the IEP team decides the location and frequency of your child's services, they are determining your child's placement. Your child's placement will be based on your child's needs and on the importance of educating your child in the least restrictive environment. You and the rest of the IEP team will begin by assuming that your child will be served in a general classroom at his or her neighborhood school. The team will work together to identify services and supports that will help your child succeed in general classes and participate in other activities at the school. Only if the team decides that your child will not be able to make progress in general classes full-time, will they consider a more restrictive placement. This could mean your child will spend most of the time in a general education classroom and some time in a special class. It could mean your child will go to a different school that is as close as possible to your neighborhood school. Or it could mean your child will go to a special school or be home schooled. The amount of time and the type of class depend on the needs of your child.

Possible placements include the following:

- a general education class for all subjects, with special materials, technology, services, or accommodations
- a general education class for some subjects and a small, special group, called a "resource class," for other subjects
- a special class for some subjects and a general education class for other subjects
- a special class for all subjects
- a special school for the whole day
- a special place to live and go to school

- instruction at home or in a hospital
- instruction in a child care center

These different types of placements make up the ***continuum of services***. Some types of placement may be available in many schools throughout the school district. Other types of placement may be available in only a few schools. Which school a student is assigned to attend is based on the district's plan for school zones and on which schools offer the placement the student needs.

Here are a few things that will help you know when your child's education placement is appropriate and not too restrictive.

- Your child is making progress.
- Your child's teacher has open expectations for what your child can do.
- Your child has access to other children who do not have disabilities.
- What your child is taught meets your child's needs.
- The classroom or school environment has no harmful effect on your child.
- Your child is receiving the quality of services he or she needs.
- Your child has access to the same equipment, technology, and areas as do children who do not have disabilities.

All of the classroom services and related services together make up a child's appropriate exceptional student education in the least restrictive environment.

In almost every case, the local public school district will be able to offer the services and placement your child needs. However, if the IEP team decides that your child needs a placement that the local school district does not offer, your school district may look for another school district or a private school to provide the services. If the IEP team decides that your child will go to a school in another district or to a private school, transportation will be made available at no cost to you.

FINAL COMMENT

Exceptional student education (ESE) provides services and supports for students with disabilities. ESE services are based on the unique needs of each child. ESE services are designed to help students with disabilities participate in general classes and activities at school as much as possible.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

2.

THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN—IEP

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THE IEP— WHAT IT IS

Every child with a disability who is eligible for and needs exceptional student education will have an IEP...

Every child with a ***disability*** who is ***eligible*** for and needs ***exceptional student education (ESE)*** will have an ***individual educational plan (IEP)***. The IEP is a written plan for the special education of a child with a disability. It describes your child and what you and the school will do to give your child the help he or she needs. Since parents help to write IEPs for their children, it is important that you know what goes into an IEP. You should also understand what will happen at ***IEP meetings*** and after the IEP is written.

The IEP is like a road map for your child's ESE services. It describes what your child can already do and what your child needs to learn. It lists the kinds of help your child will need in order to learn. Here are some things the IEP will tell you:

- what your child knows and can do now and what your child needs to learn
- what your child should learn by the end of the year
- the services, supports, ***accommodations*** and ***modifications***, and ***assistive technology*** your child will receive during the year
- how much time your child will spend in ***general***, exceptional, and ***vocational*** education during the year
- what you have agreed to do to help your child
- how your child's progress will be measured

There are three very important things for you to remember about IEPs.

- The IEP is written for your child only.
- There is only one IEP at a time for your child.
- The IEP is a plan for one year of your child's education. (The IEP team may decide to write an IEP for a shorter period of time.)

Note: If your child is age three to five years and you and the school district agree, the IEP team may develop a ***family support plan (FSP)*** instead of an IEP.

THE IEP— WHAT IT IS NOT

As your child grows, learns, and changes, the IEP will need to change...

The IEP is not a daily lesson plan. It will not tell you each little thing a teacher will do with your child. It won't take the place of the plans that teachers write for a day or week.

The IEP is not an evaluation report. An *evaluation* report describes your child's strengths and weaknesses. It lists your child's interests and special learning needs. It may include the results of tests your child has taken. The information from an evaluation report is used to help write the IEP.

The IEP is not a contract. The IEP describes things that you and the school have agreed to do for your child. It cannot promise that all the special help will work. There are many things that affect your child's learning. The school cannot control your child's health or things that happen outside the school, for example.

The IEP does not last forever. As your child grows, learns, and changes, the IEP will need to change. A new IEP must be written *at least* once every 12 months. However, the IEP *may* be changed as often as you and the school agree that it needs to be changed. Any member of the IEP team may ask for a meeting to make changes in the IEP at any time.

You and the school staff will learn new things about your child as you work with him or her. As you work together, you will find ways to make the IEP more useful.

USES OF THE IEP

You will use the IEP to know what to look for when you visit the school or talk with the teachers...

The IEP should be a working plan that parents, teachers, and school staff will use.

The school will use the IEP to

- know exactly what services, accommodations or modifications, assistive technology, and other supports to give your child
- know what classes your child will receive services in
- set up a daily or weekly schedule for all your child's services
- conduct ***IEP review*** meetings and develop new IEPs for your child (See page 58.)

You (the parent) will use the IEP to

- keep a record of what services your child should be getting
- know if your child is making progress in school
- know what assistive technology your child is using
- know which teachers to talk with about your child
- know what to look for when you visit the school or talk with the teachers
- plan to help your child make the transition from school to adult living
- know what information might be helpful to share with the school
- get ideas about what you can do at home to help your child
- know what things you have agreed to do for your child

Teachers will use the IEP to

- help them plan daily lessons and activities for your child
- work with each other to help your child
- help them choose the right kinds of learning materials and equipment for your child
- know what assistive technology your child is using
- plan activities to help your child achieve his or her transition goals
- know if your child is making progress in school
- help them share information with you

The school district will use the IEP to

- be sure that all students with disabilities get the services listed on their IEPs
- plan for the future—make sure that the school district offers the right kinds of services to meet the needs of all students

CONTENTS OF THE IEP

Many kinds of information must be discussed at the IEP meeting and written into the IEP...

An IEP is written on a form. On pages 39 through 42 you will find a blank copy of a sample IEP form. The form used in your school district may be different. You may want to ask for a blank copy of your district's IEP form.

Some children need only a very short IEP. Other children need much longer IEPs. No matter what form is used, or how long your child's IEP is, the following information must be discussed at the IEP meeting and written into the IEP.

1. Present levels of educational performance
2. Measurable annual goals
3. Benchmarks or short-term objectives
4. Description of how your child's progress will be measured and how you will be informed of your child's progress
5. Special education services
6. Related services
7. Program modifications and supports for school personnel
8. Supplementary aids and services
9. Initiation, duration, frequency, and location of services
10. Explanation of extent to which your child will be removed from programs with nondisabled children
11. Accommodations in the administration of state- or district-wide assessments

IEPs for students age 14 and older are called Transition IEPs. For students age 14 or older, the Transition IEP will describe the student's ***courses of study*** related to achieving his or her ***desired post-school outcome***. For students age 16 or older, the Transition IEP will identify needed ***transition services***. These needs must be discussed and updated on the IEP each year. (See **chapter 3**.)

Each type of information is described beginning on page 43. As you read, you can also look at the blank IEP form on pages 39 through 42.

During the IEP meeting, you and the rest of the team will consider the following:

- the strengths of your child
- the results of recent evaluations, including your child's performance on state and districtwide assessments
- your concerns for enhancing your child's education.

The IEP team will also consider the **special factors** listed below. If the team decides your child needs these services, they must be listed in the IEP.

- The team will consider your child's communication needs. (In addition, if your child is deaf or hard-of-hearing, the team must consider your child's language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communication with others, academic level, and other needs.)
- The team will consider whether your child needs assistive technology devices or services.
- If your child's behavior interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others, the team will consider strategies to address that behavior.
- If your child has limited English proficiency (if your child's main language is not English), the team will consider the language needs of your child.
- If your child is visually impaired, the IEP must provide for instruction in Braille unless the team decides, after an evaluation, that Braille instruction is not appropriate for your child.

SAMPLE IEP FORM

Individual Educational Plan

Page 1 of ____

IEP Development Date______________ Student Name____________________________ Sex M F

Grade____ School______________________________ Birth Date___________ ID # ______________

Exceptionality (ies)____

Evaluation/Reevaluation Date ________________ Date of Last IEP ____________________________

Desired Outcome School ______ Post-School ______

To be completed for all students. Desired school outcomes may include those regarding involvement in the general curriculum, school programs, courses of study, and extracurricular activities. Desired post-school outcomes may include postsecondary education, employment, living arrangements, community participation, recreation and leisure, and social activities 3 to 5 years after graduation.

The student desires to ____

____

____

Is this a Transition IEP? ___YES ___NO

General Factors

Strengths of the child ____

Results of the most recent evaluation (include results of student's performance on any state or districtwide assessments) ____

____

What concerns for their child's education have the parents expressed? ________________________

____

Special Factors

Special factors have been considered for this student. CHECK (✔) ALL identified needs addressed in this IEP:

- ☐ Need for positive behavior intervention or strategies
- ☐ Language needs (limited English proficient students)
- ☐ Need for assistive technology devices and services
- ☐ Need for specially designed/adaptive physical education
- ☐ Braille needs
- ☐ Communication and language needs
- ☐ Need for extended school year services
- ☐ Need for special transportation services

Check (✔) the instructional structure (i.e., domains, transition services activity areas) you will use and the areas within the structure in which present level of educational performance statements and measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, will be written. Transfer the domains or areas checked to the following page(s).

☐ Domains

___ Curriculum and Learning Environment
___ Social and Emotional Behavior
___ Independent Functioning
___ Communication

☐ Transition Services Activity Areas

___ Instruction
___ Related Services
___ Community Experience
___ Employment
___ Post-school Adult Living
___ Daily Living Skills
___ Functional Vocational Eval.
___ Assistive Technology

SAMPLE IEP FORM

(page 2 of 4 pages) (1 of these pages for each annual goal)

Student Name_____________________ID #__________________Date_____________Page_____of ___

Measurable Annual Goals, Including Benchmarks or Short-Term Objectives

(additional pages as needed)

Present Level of Educational Performance for ____

Specify the domain or transition area checked on the previous page. Identify the sources of information about the student; the student's strengths; how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum, or for prekindergarten children with disabilities, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities; and the priority educational needs that result from the disability.

Based on____

____

____

Effects of disability____

Priority educational need____

Measurable Annual Goal

Measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, must relate to meeting the student's needs that result from the disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum and meeting each of the student's other educational needs that result from the disability.

____

____

Assigned Instructional Duties for This Goal:

Responsibilities may include planning, implementing, documenting student performance, consulting, etc.

Lead Teacher/Staff __________________________________ Other _________________________________

Title/Position of Person(s) Responsible   Title/Position of Person(s) Responsible

Benchmarks or Short-Term Objectives **Results**

____

____

____

____

____

How Student's Progress Will Be Measured and Reported to Parents

The evaluation plan includes a statement of how the student's progress toward the annual goal will be measured.

____

____

____

The student's progress toward annual goals and the extent to which progress is sufficient to enable the student to achieve the annual goal by the end of the year will be reported to the student's parents:

____ with report cards every ____ weeks   _____ through written reports every _____ weeks

____ through conferences every _____ weeks   _____ other (specify)

SAMPLE IEP FORM

(page 3 of 4 pages)

Student Name ____________________ ID # ________________ Date __________ Page ____ of ____

Exceptional Student Education

Services, modifications, and supports are provided for the student to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals, be involved and progress in the general curriculum, participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities, and be educated and participate with other students with disabilities and nondisabled students in activities.

Special Education **Dates: Initiation** **Duration** **Frequency** **Location**

Related Services **Dates: Initiation** **Duration** **Frequency** **Location**

Program Modifications/ Supports for School Personnel **Dates: Initiation** **Duration** **Frequency** **Location**

Supplementary Aids and Services **Dates: Initiation** **Duration** **Frequency** **Location**

State and Districtwide Assessment Accommodations

Participation in state and districtwide assessment program(s) ___Yes ___No ___NA

If yes, describe needed accommodations for each ____

If no, explain why each assessment is not appropriate and describe each alternative assessment ____________________

SAMPLE IEP FORM

(page 4 of 4 pages)

Student Name ____________________ ID # ________________ Date __________ Page ____ of ____

Participation in General/Vocational Education	Percent of Time	Purpose

Removal from Programs with Nondisabled Students

Explain the extent, if any, to which the student will NOT participate with nondisabled students in the general class and extracurricular and nonacademic activities. ______________________________

____

Placement (Based on percent of time with nondisabled students)

____ General Class (more than 79% with non-ESE)
____ Resource Room (more than 40%, but less than or equal to 79% with non-ESE)
____ Separate Class (less than or equal to 40% with non-ESE)
____ Hospital/Homebound
____ Separate Day School
____ Residential Facility
____ Juvenile Justice Program

Specialized Transportation Services

Check (✔) the statement describing the condition that qualifies for weighted funding for specialized transportation services.

_____ 1. Medical equipment required (e.g., wheelchair, crutches, walker, cane, tracheotomy equipment, positioning or unique seating device).
_____ 2. Medical condition requires a special transportation environment as per physician's prescription (e.g., tinted windows, dust-controlled atmosphere, temperature control).
_____ 3. Aide or monitor required due to disability and specific need of student.
Describe:____
_____ 4. Shortened school day required due to disability and specific need of student.
Describe:____
_____ 5. School assigned is located in an out-of-district school system.
Describe:____

Participants

LEA Representative ____________________ General Education Teacher ____________________

Parent(s)____________________ Student ____________________
(if appropriate)

ESE Teacher ____________________ Evaluation Interpreter ____________________

Other IEP Team Members

____________________ ____________________

1. PRESENT LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Present levels of educational performance statements describe what your child can do and what your child knows *now*. Since the goal of ESE is to help your child reach his or her IEP goals and make progress in the general curriculum, the IEP team needs to know how your child's disability affects his or her progress. This information will help the team decide what your child needs to learn (your child's annual goals).

Here are some examples of present levels of educational performance statements.

- Based on John's results on the district reading test, John can understand what he reads at the third-grade level.
- Based on parent's reports, Mary can tie her shoes without help.
- Based on teacher's observation, Peter is not able to follow one-step directions.

Many different areas of learning can be described in this section of the IEP, including

- *pre-academic* or *academic*
- *speech and language*
- *social* and *emotional*
- *physical* and *motor*
- *sensory*
- *independent functioning*
- vocational
- community participation
- *post-school* living

A present levels of performance statement does not have to be given for every area. Such a statement will be made only for areas in which your child has a special need. Your child's IEP may contain only one present level statement, or it may include several.

2. MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

Measurable annual goals state what your child needs to learn in order to progress in the general curriculum and in order to meet each of your child's other needs related to his or her disability. These goals are based on the present levels of educational performance statements that tell what your child can do now. An IEP may contain one or more annual goals in areas such as academics, social and emotional behavior, independent functioning, and communication. Goals describe what the child should be able to learn within a year. Here are some examples of annual goals:

- By the end of the school year, Marcus will turn in 100% of the class assignments given in his general 10th grade classes.
- By the end of the school year, Alina will independently read a 5th-grade textbook and answer comprehension questions with 90% accuracy.
- By the end of the school year, Jessie will correctly follow one-step directions with 85% accuracy.
- By the end of the school year, Jacob will dress himself without help 4 out of 5 consecutive days.

Annual goals must be measurable. This means that goals should be written so that at the end of the year the IEP team can tell if your child has learned what was expected. Goals should also be reasonable. The team should not plan too much or too little for your child.

For older students, the IEP will also include annual goals related to the student's transition to post-school life. (See **chapter 3**.)

3. BENCHMARKS OR SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES

Benchmarks and ***short-term objectives*** are things your child must learn in order to reach his or her annual IEP goals. They also describe how well your child will be expected to do the task. Benchmarks and objectives, like annual goals, should be written to fit your child's needs.

Your child's IEP may contain benchmarks *or* short-term objectives, or both. Benchmarks are major milestones your child needs to reach in order to achieve his or her annual goals. Short-term objectives are similar, but usually describe smaller steps and the way the steps will be measured.

For example, here is an annual goal: *By the end of the school year, Marcus will turn in 100% of the class assignments given in his general 10th grade classes.*

For this goal, the IEP team might write the following benchmarks:

- Marcus will use a series of steps for organizing his materials so he can identify and record assignments.
- Marcus will use a task-planning strategy to record and carry out the requirements of assignments.
- Marcus will use a time-management strategy to monitor his own pace and progress of assignment completion.

However, the team could write short-term objectives instead, such as the following:

- By the end of December, Marcus will use a series of steps for organizing his materials so he can identify and record assignments and will turn in 85% of the assignments in his general 10th-grade classes.
- By the end of March, Marcus will use a task-planning strategy to record and carry out the requirements of assignments and will turn in 90% of assignments in his general 10th-grade classes.
- By the middle of June, Marcus will use a time-management strategy to monitor his own pace and progress of assignment completion and will turn in 100% of assignments for his general 10th-grade classes.

You will want to be sure that all the important steps in mastering the goals you have set are listed as benchmarks or objectives. However, the IEP is not a daily lesson plan. The benchmarks or objectives should not be so small that your child may finish them in a day or two.

4. DESCRIPTION OF HOW YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS WILL BE MEASURED AND HOW YOU WILL BE INFORMED OF YOUR CHILD'S PROGRESS

Throughout the year, you and the school will want to keep track of how well your child is doing. The IEP must describe how your child's progress toward his or her annual goals will be measured and how you will be regularly informed of that progress. You will be informed of your child's progress at least as often as parents of nondisabled children are. Reports of your child's progress will indicate the likelihood that your child will be able to achieve his or her annual IEP goals by the end of the school year.

5. SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Here are some examples of ESE services that might be listed on this part of the IEP:

- social skills training
- speech therapy
- *job coaching*
- *community-based instruction*
- special teaching methods
- travel training
- instruction in reading braille
- small group instruction
- behavior contracting
- learning strategies instruction

You will want to be sure that each service you and the school have agreed on is listed in the IEP.

6. RELATED SERVICES

Related services are special kinds of help that your child may need in order to benefit from school. Each related service needed by your child should be listed in the IEP. Some children do not need any related services; other children need several.

Here are some examples of related services:

- special transportation
- student counseling
- school health services
- social work services
- orientation and mobility services
- parent training
- *assistive technology services*
- *physical therapy*
- *occupational therapy*

The school district may arrange for outside agencies to provide related services, so long as the services are free of charge to you. The IEP may also list the name or title of the person who will make sure that your child receives each related service described in the IEP.

7. PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Your child may need changes in teaching or testing in order to make progress and demonstrate what he or she has learned. The IEP lists these changes, which IDEA calls "program modifications." This can be confusing, however, because in Florida this part of the IEP may actually include **accommodations** *or* **modifications**.

Accommodations are changes in *how* a child is taught or tested. Students who receive accommodations but not modifications usually work toward a ***standard diploma***. (See page 82.) Here are some examples of accommodations:

- having assignments or classroom tests broken up into small parts
- having extra time to complete assignments or classroom tests
- reducing the number of problems on a math assignment
- taking classroom tests alone in a quiet room
- completing homework or classroom tests using a computer

Modifications are changes in *what* a child is taught or tested on. Students who receive modifications are usually working toward a ***special diploma***, rather than a standard diploma. (See page 82.) Here are some examples of modifications:

- teaching the student different things than most students of the same age are taught
- having the student work on material from a lower grade level

Sometimes, the best way to help your child is to help your child's teacher. Therefore, your child's IEP may list a service that involves having an ESE teacher advise your child's general classroom teacher on how to teach your child. This kind of help is called ***supports for school personnel***.

Here are some examples of supports for school personnel:

- special training for the teacher
- having the teacher get advice from another teacher who is an expert in a particular teaching method
- modifications to the classroom environment
- help from a teacher's aide
- giving the teacher special materials to use with the class

8. SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS AND SERVICES

Supplementary aids and services are devices or other services that enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children as much as possible:

Here are some examples of supplementary aids and services:

- *assistive technology devices*
- large print books
- calculators
- help from an instructional aide

9. INITIATION, DURATION, FREQUENCY, AND LOCATION OF SERVICES

The IEP will tell when, where, and for how long your child will receive each ESE service,related service, accommodation or modification, support, or supplementary aid. It may also list the title of the person who will make sure that your child receives each service. The general classroom teacher may provide the services to your child or an ESE teacher may visit the classroom to work with your child. Your child may leave the general classroom several times each week to work with an ESE teacher in a resource class, or your child may spend most of the school day in a special ESE class. Some children receive some of their instruction in the community. This is because it is easier for children to learn some skills—for example, shopping skills—in the setting where they will use them.

When you and the rest of the team decide when and where your child will receive services, you are also deciding your child's *placement*. (See page 22.) Here are the types of placement information the IEP includes:

- *Initiation date* is the date the service will begin.
- *Duration* is the length of time your child is expected to need the service (e.g., one semester, regular school year, extended school year)
- *Frequency* is how often your child will receive or use the service (for example, every day, once a week, or once a month)
- *Location* is where the service will be provided or used (such as in a general classroom, in an ESE resource room, or in the community)

10. EXPLANATION OF EXTENT TO WHICH YOUR CHILD WILL BE REMOVED FROM PROGRAMS WITH NONDISABLED CHILDREN

This part of the IEP will explain the extent to which your child will not participate with nondisabled children in general education classes, general assessment, and nonacademic activities such as lunch and extracurricular activities.

Children with disabilities are educated in the ***least restrictive environment***. (See page 27.) Each IEP team begins with the idea that the child will participate in the general curriculum and be educated with children who do not have disabilities. If this does not meet the child's needs, then the IEP team considers other options. This may mean your child will spend some time in a special class. The decision will be based on your child's needs. There will be a place on the IEP to describe how much time your child will spend in special classes or activities that are not part of general education.

If your child can learn a subject in a general class, your child should be a part of that class. Courses can be adapted to fit special instructional needs of children. You will want to discuss this very carefully in the IEP meeting. Most children will spend a lot of time in a general class.

11. ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF STATE- AND DISTRICTWIDE ASSESSMENTS

The IEP must include a statement about any accommodations that will be made for your child in the administration of state- or districtwide ***assessments*** (tests).

Accommodations for tests will be similar to those used by the child during classroom instruction. However, the instructions for the particular test must allow that accommodation in order for the accommodation to be used during test-taking.

Here are some examples of testing accommodations:

- An interpreter signs the directions for a test to a child who cannot hear spoken directions.
- A child takes a three-hour test in three separate one-hour sessions, rather than in one long session.
- A child responds to questions orally or on a computer, rather than with pencil and paper.

If the IEP team decides that your child will not participate in a particular statewide or districtwide assessment, the IEP must include an explanation of why that assessment is not appropriate for your child and how your child will be assessed instead. (This is called ***alternate assessment***.)

OTHER INFORMATION THAT MAY BE ON THE IEP

Each of the types of information described above **must** be included in your child's IEP. Some school districts have added other parts to the IEP to make it more useful. Here are some things that can be added.

- Signatures—After the IEP is written, the people who helped write it will probably be asked to sign their names. Signing the IEP does not mean you agree with it; it just means you attended the meeting. If you do not agree with the IEP, you may want to write that on the IEP.
- Physical education—Tells the type of physical education your child will get (general, adaptive, or specially designed).
- Information on parent participation—Describes what the school has done to notify you about IEP meetings and help you to participate.
- Child's and/or parent's language—Tells the school what language is spoken by your family.
- Health/medical information—Describes any special health or medical problems your child has.
- Kind of diploma your child is working toward—Some students with disabilities will be able to pass the courses and tests needed to get a standard diploma. Other students will work toward a special diploma. Talk with the school staff about the kind of diploma your child can earn. (See page 82.)
- School and post-school outcomes—Some IEPs identify long-term plans for the student, such as getting job training, attending a university, or living in an adult group home. All Transition IEPs should include a desired post-school outcome statement. (See **chapter 3**.)

INFORMATION NEEDED TO WRITE IEPS

You will want to share things that worked well and things that did not seem to help...

As you can see, a lot of work goes into writing an IEP. You and the school will need to gather information about your child before you sit down together to write the IEP. Helpful information is found in many kinds of reports and records. You will want to look at as many of the following records as possible before going to the IEP meeting:

- *referral* information
- evaluation reports
- observation reports from parents, teachers, and others
- school progress reports
- records from doctors, hospitals, and other agencies

You will be asked to tell what your child does at home. Be ready to discuss your child's interests, how your child learns best, and any assistive technology your child uses. There are many things that only *you* know about your child. This information will be helpful in writing the IEP.

You will also want to tell the rest of the IEP team what you think about your child's education. Talk about what services are working well for your child— and what you think needs to be done differently. Ask about new services you think your child needs. You and your child's teachers may have tried many different ways of helping your child learn. You will want to share things that worked well and things that did not seem to help. Things that work well with your child should be part of your child's IEP.

You and the school staff may also want to look at descriptions of the services your child will be getting. It may also be helpful to look at the teacher's guide or directions that come with learning materials that may be used with your child.

IEP MEETINGS

The meeting will be held before your child begins receiving any ESE services.

The IEP must be written at an **IEP meeting**. The first IEP meeting will be held before your child begins receiving any ESE services. The following people should be present at the meeting to write your child's first IEP:

- a **person from the school system** who can make sure that your child gets the services listed on the IEP
- **your child's ESE teacher** or a teacher of a class your child *may* be in
- a **general education teacher**, if your child is or may be participating in the general education environment
- someone who understands and can explain the evaluation that was done for your child (this may be one of the people listed above)
- **you**—both parents, if possible
- **your child** (If age 14 or older, your child must be invited.)

Other people may be at the IEP meeting, such as

- a friend, relative, or other person you have asked to attend because you feel that person has special knowledge of your child
- other people, asked by the school, who know your child (such as principal, guidance counselor, physical therapist, occupational therapist, transition specialist, speech-language pathologist)
- people from agencies outside the school who work with your child, such as a public health nurse
- agency representatives, if your child is age 16 or older
- your child, whatever his or her age, if you feel your child can help to make decisions about his or her own education
- others who have worked with your child in the past

The people who work together to write your child's IEP are called the IEP team. You are part of the IEP team.

It may be helpful to have your child at the IEP meeting. Children can often tell us important things about how they learn, what their needs are, and what interests they have. You will need to decide whether to ask your child to come to the meeting. If your child is able to understand what is going on and share some of his or her own ideas, your child should be there. Students ages 14 and older must be invited to the IEP meeting. If a student age 14 or older does not attend the IEP meeting, the IEP team should take steps to be sure that the student's likes, dislikes, and interests are considered. If your child is age 14 or older, please see **chapter 3** for more information.

BEFORE THE MEETING

The school must notify you before each IEP meeting. The notice will

- be written or explained to you in your own language
- give you a day, time, and place for the meeting
- tell you the reason for the meeting (Beginning the year your child turns 14, the notice must say that one purpose of the meeting is to talk about transition.)
- tell who will be at the meeting
- let you know that you may invite anyone to the meeting who knows about your child

The school will also give you a copy of the procedural safeguards, which explains your rights as the parent of a child with a disability.

Because it is important that parents help to write the IEP, the school will make sure that you know about the meeting. The school must send you a written notice. The school staff may also call you, send electronic mail, or try in other ways to encourage you to come to the meeting.

The day, time, and place for the meeting should be ***mutually agreeable***. In other words, the time and place should be good for you and for the school staff. If you get a notice about an IEP meeting that you cannot attend, call the school right away. The school staff will try to set up a different day, time, or place. However, the meeting will usually be held during the school day.

If you cannot go to a meeting, ask the school if there is some other way you can give information and share ideas. In many cases, schools will be able to set up telephone calls, a home visit, or some other way of getting your help. If you choose not to help with the IEP, the school may go ahead without you. You still have the right to disagree with the IEP the school has written for your child. You may also disagree with your child's placement. However, if you help write the IEP, it is more likely that you and the school will be able to agree.

It is very important that you and the other IEP team members be able to understand each other. There should be an interpreter at the meeting if you do not speak English, or if you use sign language. Let the school staff know what you need. They will get an interpreter for you. You may bring someone you know to interpret for you, if you wish.

Here are some things you can do to get ready for the IEP meeting:

- Watch your child at home. Make notes on the Observation Guide on pages 8 and 9 of the separate booklet *Parents' Educational Records*. This will help you plan what you want to say at the meeting.
- Visit your child's class and watch your child work. (Call the school first.)
- Read over all the records you have kept. You may want to take them along with you to the meeting.
- Ask to look at the records the school has kept. (See **chapter 4**.)
- Talk with other people who have worked with your child, such as doctors, baby-sitters, relatives, or child care staff.
- Ask for information about the IEP form and the IEP meeting.

See pages 8 and 9 (or 14 and 15) of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

DURING THE MEETING

Feel free to make suggestions and ask questions at any time during the meeting. You are part of the team...

There will usually be one person who acts as team leader. This person will remind everyone of the purpose of the meeting. The team leader may also set a time when the meeting will end. To begin the meeting, each person should tell who he or she is and what he or she does. If this does not happen, ask for this information.

There is no one best way to write an IEP. Usually the team will share basic information such as your child's age, grade and current class, and referral information. Then most IEP teams like to discuss the results of the individual evaluation. At this point, the discussion can go in any one of several directions. The important thing to remember is that each of the kinds of information listed on page 37 must be discussed and written into the IEP during the meeting.

Present levels of performance, measurable annual goals, benchmarks or short-term objectives, and measurement of progress toward annual goals are all related. These four parts of the IEP are usually discussed together. They are the basis for the rest of the IEP.

Special education; related services; program modifications and supports for school personnel; supplementary aids and services; participation in programs with nondisabled children; accommodations in the administration of assessments; and initiation, duration, frequency, and location of services are closely related. These items, along with the names of the people who will set up the services, are usually discussed during the same part of the meeting. These decisions determine your child's placement. The special factors discussed on page 38 will also be addressed. After everything else is complete, each team member may be asked to sign the IEP.

You should feel free to make suggestions and ask questions at any time during the meeting. You are part of the team.

Here are some other things to keep in mind during the meeting.

- The IEP must actually be written *during* the IEP meeting. However, team members may bring notes for discussion purposes.
- Each team member has something to share and should have a chance to say what he or she thinks.
- You are free to disagree with any part of the IEP. If you disagree, try to do so in a helpful way—make suggestions instead of getting angry or upset.
- If team members cannot agree on one part of the IEP, go on to other parts—you can come back to the problem area later.
- If the team needs more time to complete the IEP, there can be more than one meeting.
- When you sign the IEP, it does not mean you agree with the IEP. It means you were at the meeting. (If you do not agree with the IEP, you may want to write that on the IEP.)
- The school will give you a free copy of the IEP.

See pages 10 and 11 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

AFTER THE MEETING

You will want to help your child get ready for the new services...

After the first IEP is written, the school staff will ask you to give written consent for placement. If you and the school have not been able to agree on parts of the IEP, there are several things you may do:

- Ask for another IEP meeting.
- Ask for additional evaluations.
- Talk with the school principal or the ***ESE administrator*** in your school board office.
- Ask someone outside the school to help you—a friend, other parents, a parents' group.
- Request free ***mediation*** services to help you and the school solve your differences. (See page 100.)

If these things do not work and there are still problems with the IEP, you or the school may ask for a ***due process hearing***. (See page 101.)

After the first IEP is written and you have given your consent for placement, the school will begin the services. The IEP will list the date when each service is expected to begin. You may want to check to be sure that all the plans are being carried out.

You will want to help your child get ready for the new services. Talk with your child about the services. If your child will be receiving services from a different teacher or in a different classroom or school, you may want to take your child to meet the new teacher or see the new room. (Call the school first.) If special transportation is a related service for your child, you should check on the times your child will be picked up and brought home. You will want to help make sure your child feels good about the new services.

BEGINNING SPECIAL SERVICES

You will need to stay in touch with people at the school to know exactly when the services will begin...

After an IEP has been written, the special services must begin on the date the IEP team has agreed on. The school may need a little time to get ready.

- Teachers will want to plan for your child.
- The school may need to change schedules or get special materials ready.
- Sometimes the school will need to make arrangements for special transportation.

These things should not take more than a few days. Stay in touch with people at the school to know exactly when the services will begin. If things seem to be taking too long, talk with the school principal or the ESE administrator in your school board office.

After your child has started the new services, you will want to watch his or her progress and continue your involvement. Here are some ways you can do this.

- Ask the teachers to send you notes about how your child is doing.
- Keep in touch with the teachers—find out what you can do at home to help your child.
- If your child uses assistive technology, talk to your child and the teachers to be sure the technology is working as planned.
- Visit your child's class. (Call the school first.)
- Let your child know that you are interested in his or her school work.

Problems do come up sometimes. Your child may not do as well as you and the school staff had hoped. Work with the teachers to solve the problems. They will want your help and will welcome your interest. If you need more help, speak to the principal or other administrator at the school. Most of the time, you and the school together will be able to make the IEP work. If you have tried everything you know to do and still have not been able to solve the problems, here's what you can do:

- Ask for changes in the IEP. (See IEP Review Meeting, page 58.)
- Ask for another individual evaluation or an ***independent educational evaluation***. (See **chapter 4**.)
- Write your concerns in a note or letter to the ESE administrator in your school board office.
- Ask for free ***mediation*** services. (See page 100.)
- Ask for a ***due process hearing***. (See page 101.)
- File a ***complaint*** with the Florida Department of Education. (See page 106.)

See page 13 & 14 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records*.

IEP REVIEW MEETING

You and the school should agree about the changes made in the IEP at the time of the review...

The school must hold an IEP meeting at least once every 12 months to review your child's progress and to develop a new IEP. Your child's services and placement will also be reviewed at this meeting.

The IEP team will review your child's current IEP and discuss questions such as these:

- What progress has your child made toward participation in the general curriculum?
- What additional accommodations are needed for your child to be successful in the general curriculum?
- Which annual goals has your child mastered? Which annual goals need to be changed? Which annual goals can be added?
- Do the services or supports need to be changed?
- Does your child's assistive technology need to be changed?
- Does your child's placement need to be changed?
- Are other transition services needed?
- Is there a need for more evaluations?
- Does your child still need ESE services?

The process for developing a new IEP is much like the process for developing the first IEP. One difference is that after the first IEP was written, the school asked for your consent for placement. You will not be asked to give your consent for placement after later IEP meetings, even if your child's placement changes.

Although IEP meetings must be held at least once every 12 months, they may be held more often. For example, an IEP meeting must be held any time you or the school wants to change your child's services or placement. Anyone who sees a need may ask for a review meeting at any time. Here are some reasons you might ask for a review meeting before the end of the 12 months:

- Your child is not making as much progress as expected.
- Your child is making more progress than expected.
- Your child needs services for more time or less time.
- Your child's needs have changed.
- New information about your child is available that could impact the IEP.

If you wish to ask for an IEP meeting before the 12 months are up, you may want to write to the school to explain why a meeting is needed. The school will hold an IEP meeting if you ask for one. If your request is turned down, the school district must tell you why in writing and tell you how to get a copy of your procedural safeguards. If you cannot resolve your disagreement with the school, you may ask for mediation or for a due process hearing. (See **chapter 4**.)

You will want to prepare for any IEP review meeting in the same way you prepared for the first IEP meeting. Look at your own records and the school's records again. You may want to visit your child's classes and talk with the teachers. (Call the school first.) Check over your Observation Guide. (See pages 8, 9, 14, and 15 of the separate booklet ***Parents' Educational Records***.) Make notes about anything that has changed. Make a list of things you want to say or suggestions you have for changing the IEP. You and your child's teachers may want to share information and discuss ideas before the IEP meeting, as well.

See pages 8–11 and page 19 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records*.

MATRIX OF SERVICES

The matrix is completed after the IEP is written...

A small number of Florida's students with disabilities have a ***Matrix of Services***. The State of Florida uses the matrices to determine how much money school districts will receive to provide special education programs for all their students.

The matrix is not part of the IEP, but it is based on the IEP. The matrix is completed *after* the IEP is written. Sometimes it is done during the IEP meeting.

Most students with disabilities will not have a matrix, but a few will. If the school staff say your child needs a matrix, it will be completed by someone at the school. That person will check off on the matrix each service listed on your child's IEP in each of the following areas:

- Curriculum and Learning Environment
- Social/Emotional Behavior
- Independent Functioning
- Health Care
- Communication

Within each area, the IEP team may have decided that your child will receive no services, some services (such as help from a specialist for your child's teacher, or adapted instructional materials), or very intense services (such as the help of an aide for all activities in that area). The services your child will receive will be transferred to the matrix. Services that are checked off on the matrix must be services your child is actually receiving, as described in the IEP.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

Because you know your child better than anyone does, it is important that you help the school to meet your child's needs...

The laws and rules about educating children with disabilities are meant to help make sure your child gets special services that will meet his or her learning needs. But laws and rules are not enough. The best services, the best IEP, and the best efforts of the school staff are not enough. Parents must do their part, so that the services listed on the IEP will have a chance to work. Because you know your child better than anyone else, it is important that you help the school to meet your child's needs.

Here are some of the things the school expects of you.

- If you have promised to go to a meeting, be there on time or let the school know that your plans have changed.
- Come to meetings prepared to discuss your child's strengths and needs.
- Share your ideas and information when you are at a meeting. Ask questions when you don't understand.
- Listen carefully to others—keep an open mind.
- If you disagree, do so in a helpful way—be able to explain why you disagree.
- Read the letters and notices you get from the school.
- Think carefully about the decisions you are asked to make.
- Do the things that you have agreed to do, or let the school know you can't.

There are things that can be done only by you at home. It is sometimes a good idea to put these things into the IEP. This helps everyone know who is going to do what. Here are some sample IEP statements about things parents can do.

- Parent will check David's homework every night.
- Parent will make sure that Maria is ready for the bus on time every day.
- Parent will have Javon dress himself every morning.

If you have agreed to do something as part of your child's IEP, you will want to keep in touch with the school. Let them know how things are going and whether your part of the IEP is working.

There are other things you will want to do, even if they are not written into the IEP:

- Show your child you are interested in his or her school work.
- Send your child to school on time every day.
- Make sure your child has the things he or she needs for school—pencils and notebook for example.
- Make sure your child gets enough sleep at night.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

3.

PLANNING FOR TRANSITION TO POST-SCHOOL LIFE

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TRANSITION PLANNING

The IEP can become a plan that will help your young person move from school to adult life...

This chapter will help you understand how the ***individual educational plan (IEP)*** can become a plan that will help your young person move from school to adult life. This move is called transition, and an IEP that helps prepare a student for transition is called a ***Transition IEP***. (See **chapter 2** for information about IEPs, including Transition IEPs.)

Transition planning focuses on plans and dreams you and your young person have for the future. The purpose of transition planning is to provide your young person with the services and supports he or she needs to make a successful move into adult life. Transition planning usually begins at age 14, but may begin before age 14 for some students. For example, earlier transition planning may help stop a student from dropping out of school. Earlier transition planning may also be needed for a student with significant disabilities, because it may take more time to set up needed post-school services.

- Transition planning *should* take place for any student with disabilities who has an IEP, beginning by the time the student turns 14.
- Transition planning *should* be part of the IEP process.
- Transition services *should* be part of the IEP, not a separate plan.
- Transition planning *should not* be a one-time event.
- Transition planning *should not* involve only the school staff.

Note: This chapter uses the term "young person" instead of "child" to refer to students planning for transition from school to adult life.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The success of transition planning depends on each member of the team...

The success of transition planning depends on each member of the team helping the student reach his or her dreams for the future. Parents are a very important part of this process. Your involvement determines how successful your young person's transition will be.

It is also important that your young person participate as much as possible in the transition planning process, especially in deciding what he or she would like to do after leaving school.

You and your young person know more than anyone else about

- your young person's goals for adult life
- strengths and resources of your family
- strengths and resources of your extended family and the community
- services your family needs
- services and service providers that have helped you in the past

WHAT ARE TRANSITION SERVICES?

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities that help a student move from school to post-school activities...

The purpose of transition planning is to provide your young person with the services and support he or she needs to make a successful move into adult life. The Transition IEP team plans the services that will help your young person make this transition. The team is made up of you, your young person, teachers, and representatives of other agencies.

Transition services help students prepare for ***post-school activities*** such as

- college or university programs
- continuing and adult education
- ***vocational*** training
- employment
- adult services from various agencies
- independent living
- community participation

The ***Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*** says the following about transition:

- For each student with a disability beginning at age 14 (or younger, if appropriate), the IEP must include a statement of the student's ***transition service needs***, focusing on the ***courses of study*** the student will follow to achieve his or her desired post-school outcomes.
- For each student with a disability beginning at age 16 (or younger, if appropriate), the IEP must include a statement of needed ***transition services*** for the student, including, if appropriate, a statement of the ***interagency responsibilities*** or any ***linkages***.

"Transition service needs" and "transition services" are the terms used in IDEA. However, they sound so much alike that they can be confusing. When possible in this book, the term "courses of study" is used instead of "transition service needs" to make these ideas less confusing.

Transition services must

- be based on your young person's individual needs
- take into account your young person's likes and interests
- include needed activities in the areas of
    - — instruction
    - — related services
    - — community experiences
    - — development of employment and other post-school living skills
    - — ***daily living skills***, if appropriate
    - — ***functional vocational evaluation***, if appropriate
- include services provided by other agencies, if appropriate (for example, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Developmental Disabilities Program, Mental Health Program, Division of Blind Services)

The following pages explain how the school provides transition services. They also explain how you and your young person can make transition a success.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT THE TRANSITION IEP MEETING?

The process of developing a plan for a young person in need of transition services is a bit different...

You will be asked to help write a Transition IEP when your young person is 14 years old, and at least once every 12 months after that. You may be familiar with the process of developing a regular IEP. The process of developing a Transition IEP is a bit different. The contents of the Transition IEP are somewhat different too. (See page 75.)

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

The *notice* about the *Transition IEP meeting* is different than the notice you received about *IEP meetings* when your child was younger.

In addition to the information required for any IEP meeting notice (see chapter 2), the written notice for a Transition IEP meeting must tell you

- that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss courses of study (transition services needs) or needed transition services
- that your young person has been invited
- which other agencies have been invited to the meeting (for students age 16 or older)

PARTICIPANTS

People who must be invited to the Transition IEP meeting are

- your young person
- you
- one or more of your young person's ESE teachers
- one or more of your young person's ***general education*** teachers, if your young person is or will be participating in the general education environment
- a representative of the school district
- a representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services (if your young person is age 16 or older)
- any other person that you, the school, or an agency believes has knowledge of your young person or special equipment used by your young person

If an agency invited to come to a Transition IEP meeting does not do so, the school district must take other steps, such as letters or phone calls, to try to have that agency participate.

Your young person must be invited to participate in Transition IEP meetings. If your young person is not able to attend the meeting, the Transition IEP team must take steps to make sure they consider your young person's needs, preferences, and interests.

PREPARATION FOR THE TRANSITION IEP MEETING

Discuss goals and desires for the future with your young person and his or her teachers before the meeting...

It's a good idea to get ready for the Transition IEP meeting before you go. Discuss goals and desires for the future with your young person and his or her teachers before the meeting. Your child's teacher may provide a pre-meeting form that will help you prepare. If not, you may use the Transition Observation Guide on pages 14 and 15 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records*. Also, organize your records to bring to the meeting. This way, any information you need will be at your fingertips.

Before the Transition IEP meeting, you may want to

- gather background information—anything about your young person's present and future situation, such as recent IEPs, ***evaluations***, and work history
- learn about the contents of the Transition IEP and what will happen during the Transition IEP meeting
- think about what services, including ***assistive technology***, your young person needs to reach his or her ***desired post-school outcome***
- sign and return the exchange of information forms; this allows the school to share information on your young person with other agencies that may provide transition services
- become familiar with local services that may help your young person
- be sure you understand which diploma option your young person is working toward (See page 82.)

See pages 15 & 16 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records*.

You and the teachers can help your young person prepare for the Transition IEP meeting by

- giving your young person information about the transition planning process
- asking your young person about his or her interests and abilities
- asking your young person about his or her goals for post-school adult life and helping your young person to develop a desired post-school outcome statement that reflects the living arrangements, work, postsecondary education, and recreational and social activities he or she hopes to participate in
- helping your young person review and update his or her transition portfolio (a collection of school records, job history, work samples, and career plan)
- encouraging your young person to help fill out a pre-planning form for transition services and reviewing it with your young person
- helping your young person understand which type of diploma he or she is working toward (See page 82.)
- teaching your young person ***self-advocacy*** skills

CONTENTS OF THE TRANSITION IEP

The Transition IEP contains some special kinds of information...

The Transition IEP contains all the information that other IEPs do. (See **chapter 2**.) The Transition IEP also contains some extra information, including

- a statement regarding courses of study (transition service needs) (for students age 14 and older)
- a statement of needed transition services (for students age 16 and older)
- a desired post-school outcome statement
- a list of agency responsibilities and linkages, if appropriate (for students age 16 and older)
- an indication of whether the student is working toward a ***standard diploma*** or a ***special diploma*** (See page 82.)
- at least one year before the student reaches the age of 18, a statement that the student has been informed of the rights that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of 18

The sections below describe ways in which the Transition IEP is especially designed to meet the needs of students preparing to enter adult life. As you read, you may want to look at page 79 for a sample transition page of an IEP for a student age 14 or older.

DESIRED POST-SCHOOL OUTCOME STATEMENT

The desired post-school outcome statement describes your young person's dreams for life after graduation. It is important because it gives the IEP team goals to work toward. The rest of the Transition IEP is based on the student's desired post-school outcome. (On the sample IEP included in this booklet, the desired post-school outcome statement is written on the first page of the IEP. See page 39.)

The desired post-school outcome statement should focus on

- where your young person will live
- what kind of job he or she will have
- what kind of postsecondary education he or she will pursue
- what he or she will do for fun
- how he or she will participate in social activities
- how he or she will become part of the community

This statement should be updated each year. Here are some examples of desired post-school outcome statements:

- *Lee wants to be included in community activities (volunteer work and leisure) and live in an apartment for people with disabilities.*
- *Leslie wants to become a master carpenter, own her own woodworking business, buy her own home, and travel with friends.*
- *Roberto wants to earn an associate of arts degree at the local community college and then attend a four-year college or university to prepare for a career in advertising.*

PRESENT LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

In a Transition IEP, the ***present levels of educational performance*** statements should focus on areas that are related to the desired post-school outcome statement. All Transition IEP team members must have a clear picture of your young person's abilities and interests. This information may come from your young person's portfolio or file, as well as from your young person, your family, teachers, and agency staff.

MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS AND BENCHMARKS OR SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES

Annual goals are stepping stones from your young person's present levels of performance to the hopes for the future expressed in the desired post-school outcome statement.

Below is an example of a ***measurable annual goal*** with ***benchmarks***. Remember, the Transition IEP team may write benchmarks *or* ***short-term objectives***. The team does *not* have to write both benchmarks *and* short-term objectives.

Annual Goal: *Lee will communicate effectively in the community 8 out of 10 opportunities using an augmentative communication device.*

Benchmark 1: *Lee will use the device in school.*
Benchmark 2: *Lee will use the device at his church.*
Benchmark 3: *Lee will use the device throughout the school and community.*

Below is an example of a measurable annual goal with short-term objectives.

Annual Goal: *Leslie will investigate renting an apartment using appropriate procedures 90 percent of the time.*

Short-Term Objective 1: *By January 15, Leslie will use newspapers, the internet, and other sources of information to develop a list of 10 rental complexes that offer apartments in her price range.*
Short-Term Objective 2: *By March 1, Leslie will rank order the 10 rental complexes according to how close they are to a bus stop and how much square footage they offer.*
Short-Term Objective 3: *By March 15, Leslie will contact two rental complexes and have a list of all the documents and deposits required by each for a new rental.*

All Transition IEP team members should be involved in developing annual goals and the benchmarks or short-term objectives that go with them. It is especially important that you and your young person be involved.

Needs Addressed by Measurable Annual Goals

For younger students, IEP goals are written in domains such as Curriculum and Learning Environment or Communication. However, for older students, Transition IEP goals address needs in particular activity areas that relate directly to post-school life, such as community experiences, employment, and daily living skills.

The Transition IEP team will write annual goals in any of the activity areas in which your young person has needs. One annual goal may address more than one activity area.

STATEMENT OF COURSES OF STUDY (TRANSITION SERVICE NEEDS)

Beginning when your young person is age 14, the Transition IEP will include a statement of transition service needs. Transition service needs focus on courses your young person will take in order to prepare for transition to post-school life. This statement must be updated each year.

Here are some examples of transition service needs focusing on courses of study:

- advanced placement courses to prepare for college
- vocational education courses to prepare for a career
- courses in daily living skills such as preparing meals, using public transportation, and managing money

STATEMENT OF NEEDED TRANSITION SERVICES

When your young person is age 16 or older, the Transition IEP will include a statement of needed transition services in the following areas:

- **instruction**—***academic*** or vocational programs, services, and activities
- **community experiences**—participation in community activities such as recreation and shopping
- **employment**—activities such as vocational instruction, ***supported employment***, ***on-the-job training***, occupational training, and career exploration
- **post-school adult living**—activities that teach skills necessary for living and participating in the community, such as self-advocacy training and training in how to rent an apartment, make good decisions, pay bills, and get along with others

If appropriate for your young person, the Transition IEP team will also identify needed transition services in the following activity areas:

- **daily living skills**—activities that teach your young person to manage personal needs as independently as possible
- **functional vocational evaluation**—an evaluation that collects information on your young person's vocational interests, strengths, and weaknesses

RESPONSIBILITIES AND LINKAGES

The Transition IEP team must create connections, or linkages, with agencies that can provide services for your young person after he or she leaves school.

When your young person is age 16 or older, the Transition IEP must identify any community agencies that will provide services your young person needs to achieve his or her desired post-school outcome. It is important that these agencies participate in the transition process.

See pages 17 & 18 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

SAMPLE IEP FORM—TRANSITION PAGE

Student Name ______________ ID # ____________ Age _____ Date ___________ Page ____ of ____

Transition

Beginning no later than the student's 14th birthday, and updated annually, identify the transition service needs of the student, focusing on the student's courses of study. ____

____

____

Diploma _____Standard _____Special [☐ Option 1 ☐ Option 2] _____ NA

Beginning no later than the student's 16th birthday, or younger if appropriate, include a statement that identifies the needed transition services for the student in the transition services activity areas listed below. If no services are needed in any of the required transition services activity areas, the team must develop a statement to that effect and indicate the basis on which the determination was made.

Required

1. Instruction ____

____

2. Related Services ____

____

3. Community Experience ____

____

4. Employment ____

____

5. Post-school Adult Living ____

____

If appropriate

6. Daily Living Skills ____

____

7. Functional Vocational Evaluation____

Transfer of Rights

CHECK (✔) if the student has been informed, at least one year prior to reaching the age of majority, of the rights that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority. Indicate the date when the student was informed.

____The student has been informed. Date of Notification ______________________

Responsibili[illegible]d/or Linkages for Transition Services

Beginning no later than the student's 16th birthday, or younger if appropriate, include a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. A person's signature indicates willingness to provide supports, services, or skills that relate to the Transition IEP.

Agency Represented	Responsibilities	Agency Representative's Signature
Agency Represented	Responsibilities	Agency Representative's Signature
Parent	Responsibilities	Parent's Signature
Student	Responsibilities	Student's Signature

TRANSITION TEAM WORK

All members of the Transition IEP team must do their part...

As you can see, for your young person to have a successful transition into adult life, all members of the Transition IEP team must do their part.

School District/School Responsibilities

The school district will have the main responsibility to make sure that the annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks are met. If a service on the Transition IEP has not been provided, the school district must get the Transition IEP team back together to find another way of providing the service. The school district is also responsible for helping students and agencies link up with one another.

Agency Responsibilities

Representatives from other agencies may be asked to attend Transition IEP meetings. Other agencies often have many responsibilities in the transition process.

Here are some reasons that agencies are invited to Transition IEP meetings.

- Your young person may need agency assistance during his or her final years of school.
- An agency may need to take responsibility for some of the measurable annual goals and benchmarks or short-term objectives.
- An agency may need to take responsibility for purchasing, maintaining, and training on assistive technology your young person needs.
- Agency representatives may need to reassure you that the agency will provide support and services once the young person has left school.
- Agencies may have been helpful to your young person in the past.

If an agency that was to provide a service does not do so, the Transition IEP team will meet again to work out another way to provide that service to the student.

Family Responsibilities

The family provides the most day-to-day support for their child from birth to adult life, so the family knows best which services their young person needs to make the transition from school to adult life. Families, schools, and agencies are partners in the transition process.

Student Responsibilities

Your young person also has responsibilities in the transition planning process, such as

- taking an active role in developing the Transition IEP
- going to class
- completing homework assignments
- learning more about his or her disability and how to get the services and supports he or she needs to achieve long-term goals
- developing and using self-advocacy skills
- learning about the transition process
- thinking about what services would help him or her in daily adult life, so that the transition team may invite the appropriate agencies to the Transition IEP meeting
- thinking about what he or she wants to do—and where he or she wants to do it—in the years immediately after school
- meeting and working with career and guidance counselors to determine which courses and other school experiences are required for desired post-school activities
- saving money for post-school activities
- learning how to use and maintain the assistive technology he or she needs
- accepting responsibility for chores at home

CHOOSING A DIPLOMA OPTION

The diploma decision will greatly affect your young person's future...

Graduating from high school marks a student's transition to adult life. In Florida, most students receive a standard diploma when they complete high school. However, some students with disabilities are not able to meet the requirements for a standard diploma, so they work toward a special diploma instead.

The choice of which diploma to work toward will made by you, your young person, and the rest of the IEP team. The diploma decision will be based on your young person's needs and desired post-school outcomes.

The IEP team may talk about the diploma option at any time. However, the team must make a diploma decision at the IEP meeting during your young person's eighth grade year or during the school year of your young person's 14th birthday.

The diploma decision will greatly affect your young person's future. This is because there are important differences between a standard diploma and a special diploma.

Standard diploma—The student studies the general curriculum (the same things nondisabled students study), with ***accommodations*** to *how* the material is taught and how the student is tested, if needed. The student meets the regular ***Sunshine State Standards***. The student earns at least 24 credits in high school with at least a 2.0 grade point average. The student passes the state graduation test.

Special diploma (Option 1)—The student cannot learn all the same things nondisabled students learn, even with accommodations. The student needs ***modifications*** to the curriculum—changes in *what* he or she is expected to learn. The student meets the ***Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma*** and meets the school district's requirements for credits and grade point average.

Special diploma (Option 2)—The student cannot learn all the same things nondisabled students learn, even with accommodations. The student needs modifications to the curriculum. The student fulfills an individually designed graduation plan that includes employment and community living skills.

Employers, adult education programs, vocational schools, the military, colleges, and universities all accept a standard diploma. However, the military, colleges, and universities usually do not accept a special diploma. So a special diploma may limit your young person's options in post-school adult life. For this reason, if your young person is able to earn a standard diploma, he or she should work toward a standard diploma.

Here are some questions the IEP team will consider before making the diploma decision:

- Can your young person learn the skills required to meet the Sunshine State Standards?
- What accommodations for classroom work and tests does your young person need to meet the Sunshine State Standards?
- What modifications in course requirements does your young person need?
- Can your young person earn the credits and grade point average required to earn a standard diploma?
- Can your young person pass the state graduation test?
- What are the district's requirements for the special diploma?
- If your young person cannot meet the requirements for a standard diploma, is he or she going to work toward special diploma option 1 or special diploma option 2?

As you can see, it is important to make the diploma decision carefully. However, the decision can be changed if the diploma choice turns out to be wrong for your child. For instance, if it is not clear whether your young person will be able to meet the requirements for a standard diploma, the IEP team may decide to have your young person try and if he or she is not able to meet the requirements, to change to a special diploma later.

With careful planning and monitoring of progress, most students with disabilities are able to earn either a standard diploma or a special diploma. However, some students may complete the required courses but not be able to meet the other requirements for a diploma. These students may receive a ***certificate of completion*** or a ***special certificate of completion***.

Students who are at least 18 years old and who have not earned a standard diploma may try to earn a ***GED diploma***. To earn this diploma, the student must pass the Tests of General Educational Development (GED). The GED tests are written on a ninth-grade reading level.

Remember that your child's right to a ***free appropriate public education (FAPE)*** ends when your child receives a standard diploma or a GED diploma. However, if your child has a special diploma, certificate of completion, or special certificate of completion but has not reached his or her 22nd birthday, your child may still receive ESE services from the school district.

GETTING A HEAD START ON TRANSITION

It is never too early to plan for transition to adult life...

Preparing your young person for transition to adult life is a gradual process. Even if your young person is not old enough to participate in job training or to develop independent living skills, there is a lot you can do now.

Here are some suggestions for you to consider as your child grows up.

PRESCHOOL

- Encourage your child to strive for early independence.
- Involve your child in activities that foster self-respect, self-esteem, and self-determination.
- Take your child into the community. Point out community members and talk about what they do.
- Encourage your child to talk about what he or she might like to do as an adult.
- Show your child how much you enjoy your own work.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Encourage your child to dress and groom appropriately and to take care of his or her own self-care or cleanliness needs.
- Assign your child specific duties around the house. Insist that your child do them thoroughly and on time.
- Give your child an allowance and let him or her spend some of the money and save some.
- Encourage your child to get involved in activities outside of school, such as sports, clubs, and music or art.
- Encourage your child to participate with you in volunteer activities in the community.

- Introduce your child to people who do various kinds of work. Include people with disabilities and people without disabilities. Discuss what the worker is doing and encourage your child to talk about what job he or she might like to do.
- Attend your child's IEP meetings.
- Include goals related to ***social*** and community skills in the IEP.
- Take your child to work with you on "Take Your Daughter (or Son) to Work Day."

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Attend IEP meetings and ask that your child participate in vocational assessment.
- Address career awareness, career exploration, and vocational education in the IEP.
- Identify adults services such as those provided by the Developmental Disabilities Program, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and other agencies that provide job training and living services.
- Help prepare your child to participate in community programs by taking your child with you when taking part in community activities.
- Visit work and independent living programs to identify what options will be available when your child leaves school.
- Monitor your child's progress toward annual IEP goals by talking with team members and your child.
- Talk to other families who have gone through the transition process. Find out what has been helpful to them.
- Talk to the school staff about whether your child should work toward a standard diploma or a special diploma. Learn about the differences between a standard diploma and a special diploma.
- Begin to explain the IEP process to your child.
- Help your child develop self-advocacy skills.
- Help your child update the career plan and transition portfolio.

HIGH SCHOOL

- Develop a plan to increase independence. Let your young person make decisions and take reasonable risks.
- Encourage your young person to become involved in community activities and increase his or her circle of friends.
- Attend Transition IEP meetings with your young person.
- Help your young person learn to direct his or her own IEP meeting.
- Help decide if your young person will work toward a standard diploma or a special diploma.
- Address employment training at actual work sites in the Transition IEP.

- Address vocational education opportunities at the high school or area technical center in the IEP.
- Encourage your young person to find paid or unpaid employment in the community.
- Teach your young person to use public transportation independently.
- Encourage your young person to update the career plan and transition portfolio.
- Help your young person monitor his or her progress toward annual IEP goals and the desired post-school outcome.
- Teach your young person to be responsible for any special equipment he or she needs.
- Identify services provided by adult agencies.
- Investigate adult living options available in your community.
- Consult legal experts about financial planning, guardianship, and estate planning.
- Become aware of Social Security work incentives and help your young person apply for ***Supplemental Security Income*** ***(SSI)*** after his or her 18th birthday, if appropriate.
- Introduce your young person to people with disabilities who are successfully employed.
- Help your young person continue to develop and use self-advocacy skills.

FINAL COMMENT

Schools alone cannot get a young person ready for adulthood. The family, the community, service agencies, and the young person must share responsibility for transition. When the Transition IEP team carries out the transition process well, your young person benefits.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

4.

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WHAT ARE PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

Procedural safeguards give parents and schools a set of rules to help them work together...

This chapter will help you understand the rights and responsibilities that go along with ***exceptional student education (ESE)***. The United States law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says that as the parent of a child with a disability, you have certain ***procedural safeguards***. These are rules about what procedures the school (and parents) must use in making decisions about a child's ESE services.

The procedural safeguards can be hard to understand—even for attorneys and judges. Along with reading this chapter, you may want some training or other help. The ESE administrator in your local school district office will be happy to tell you where you can get help or training.

Procedural safeguards are designed to make the ESE process fair for you and the school and to help make sure your child receives a free appropriate public education. Procedural safeguards give parents and schools a set of rules to help them work together. The procedural safeguards also give parents and schools ways to solve problems and settle disagreements.

Procedural safeguards were put into the laws and rules to help parents and schools. If you have good reason to believe that your child has not been treated fairly, you should make use of your rights, including your rights to ***mediation*** and to a ***due process hearing***. There are people who will help you do this. Many of the groups listed in **chapter 5** will be able to work with you.

The procedural safeguards give responsibilities to both schools and parents. The procedural safeguards are not concerned with what is easy for schools or for parents. They are concerned with what is best for the student with a disability.

Note: The rights given by ***IDEA*** to the parent of a student with a disability transfer to the student at the ***age of majority***. In Florida, this ***transfer of rights*** occurs when the student reaches his or her 18th birthday.

If you have read **chapter 1**, you already know that you and your child with a disability have many rights, such as the rights to

- a *free appropriate public education*
- a complete, fair individual *evaluation*
- an *individual educational plan (IEP)*
- an education in the *least restrictive environment*
- a yearly review of student progress

IDEA's procedural safeguards also give you, your child, and the school specific rights during each part of the ESE process that was described in **chapter 1**. These rights are explained in the section that begins on page 107. If you would like to know more, you can obtain the documents listed below from the Clearinghouse Information Center (CIC) at the address listed on the inside front cover of this booklet.

READING MATERIALS

- **"Summary of Procedural Safeguards for Students with Disabilities"**—A booklet that explains the rights given to students with disabilities, their parents, and schools as part of the United States law called IDEA. (Request CIC item number 309256.)
- **"Mediation in Special Education"** —A brochure that explains the mediation process. (Request CIC item number 308010.)
- ***Volume I-C: Federal Laws and Regulations Pertaining to the Education of Students with Disabilities***—Contains the text of United States laws and rules related to the education of students with disabilities, including IDEA. (Request CIC item number 302080.)
- ***Volume I-B: Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules***—Contains the text of Florida's laws and rules related to the education of students with disabilities. (Request CIC item number 302079.)
- ***Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students***—Each local school district has its own set. (Request this from your local school district.)

KINDS OF PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

You have the right to help make certain decisions about your child's education...

There are three kinds of procedural safeguards that will be especially important to you and your child with a disability:

- The right to have written notice
- The right to participate
- The right to give or not give consent

You will have the opportunity to use these rights at various times during your child's education.

THE RIGHT TO HAVE WRITTEN NOTICE

Written ***notice***—*A written communication from the school to the parents describing an action the school plans to take that will affect their child's education.*

There are many times when the school must give you a written notice. This notice may tell you what the school plans to do for your child, or it may tell you about meetings that will be held or decisions that have been made. The school staff must send you a written notice any time they propose to (or refuse to) begin or change your child's ***identification***, evaluation, services, or ***placement***. You will get a notice from the school when

- there is a meeting you should go to
- the school has agreed to, or turned down, a request you have made
- the school wants to individually evaluate or reevaluate your child
- the school staff plans to change your child's services or placement
- the team has decided, at an ***eligibility staffing*** meeting, that your child is or is not ***eligible*** for ESE
- the IEP team has decided to dismiss your child from ESE

The notice must

- be written in a way that is easy for you to understand
- tell you what the school plans to do (or refuses to do)
- tell you why the school plans to take or refuses to take the action
- explain any other options the school considered and why they were rejected
- describe any evaluation procedure, test, record, report, or other factor the school used to make the decision
- tell you how you can get a copy of the procedural safeguards
- tell you what to do if you do not agree with what the school plans to do
- be sent in plenty of time for you to make your own plans
- tell you who to call if you do not understand the notice

If you understand and agree with what is in the notice, there is very little you need to do. Keep the notice in your file. Plan to go to any meeting you have been asked to attend. If you do not understand the notice, call the school right away. Someone there will explain what the notice means. If you do not agree with what the notice says, there are many things you can do.

- First, contact the person named in the notice.
- Then, talk with the principal.
- Next, call the ***ESE administrator*** in your local school district office.
- Then, ask for a meeting, such as another eligibility staffing or ***IEP meeting***.
- You may need to write a letter to explain your point of view. (See the sample letter on page 157.)
- You may ask for free mediation services at any time. (See page 100.)
- Finally, if you and the school still cannot agree, you can ask for a due process hearing. (See page 101.)

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Participation—*The act of sharing, joining, or working with others to make decisions or complete a task (such as writing an IEP).*

You have the right to help make certain decisions about your child's education. The school must ask you to participate whenever there is a meeting related to the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child or to the provision of a free appropriate public education to your child. The school will ask you to participate in any meeting to

- determine your child's eligibility for ESE
- write or review your child's IEP
- make decisions about your child's placement or services
- dismiss your child from ESE

The school should also ask you to participate in

- the evaluation of your child
- parent education meetings
- meetings with teachers or other school staff members

Sometimes, *you* may ask the school to set up a meeting. No matter who asks for the meeting, when you participate, you make it easier for the school to serve your child. When you participate you will want to

- share information about your child and your child's needs
- listen to and think about what other people are saying
- ask questions
- keep notes or records about the meetings
- share your ideas about what can be done to help your child
- make sure you understand what is going to happen next

Meetings should be held in your own language. If you use sign language, an interpreter should be provided. Be sure to let the school know before the meeting if you need an interpreter. You may bring someone to interpret, if you wish.

Whenever you are asked to participate, you will want to prepare. You will want to read over your own records. You may want to study parts of this book. You can visit your child's class and talk to your child's teachers. (Call the school first.) You should make notes about things you want to say or questions you want to ask. Take them along with you to the meeting. You may also want to take someone with you to the meeting—such as a friend, relative, or other person who has knowledge of your child and can help you.

THE RIGHT TO GIVE OR NOT GIVE CONSENT

Consent—*Parents' agreement to let the school take an action that affects their child's education.*

For some actions, the school staff only have to let you know what they have decided to do or not do (give you notice). If you disagree with the decision and cannot work the problem out with the school, you may ask for a due process hearing (see page 101) in order to stop the school from taking or refusing to take that action. However, school staff must have your written consent before they take the following actions:

- do an individual evaluation of your child
- place your child and provide ESE services for the first time
- do individual tests or other evaluation activities as part of a reevaluation of your child

When you give your consent it means you agree to let the school staff do something for your child. You will be asked to sign a form that says you agree to what the school is planning. Sometimes consent is called "permission."

When you are asked to give your consent, the school staff must

- explain what they want to do, in your own language or in a way that you understand
- tell you that you have the right to say "No"—that you do not have to give your consent if you don't agree
- tell you that you have the right to change your mind at any time *before* the activity occurs—even after you have signed a form
- give your a copy your procedural safeguards, if they are asking your consent for your child to be individually evaluated

You will want to think very carefully about whether to give your consent. After all, you are making very important decisions about your child's education. You will also want to remember that if you decide not to give consent, or if you change your mind after signing the form, the school may ask for a due process hearing. (See page 101.)

You have several choices when the school asks for your consent.

- You may agree and sign the form.
- You may ask for more information.
- You may ask for time to think about what is best for your child. You may want to talk with other parents or friends or ask for advice from someone outside the school. (The school staff will usually give you more time if you ask for it.)
- You may ask the school staff to change parts of what they are planning. They will either make the change or decide that they can't make the change. If the school staff refuses to make the change, they will let you know in writing.
- You may decide not to give consent. Be sure that the school staff understand your reasons for this decision. (The school staff may try to help your child in another way, or they may suggest mediation or ask for a due process hearing. The school staff will ask for a due process hearing only if they believe it is best for your child.)

Most of the time you and the school staff will be able to work together to make changes and agree on what will be done.

Remember, for *some* actions, the school must give you a written notice but does not need your consent. However, the school staff should ask for your input. Here are some things the school can do without your consent:

- hold an eligibility staffing or an IEP meeting (You must be invited to participate in these meetings.)
- change your child's placement or services (Any change in placement must be based on the decision of the IEP team, of which you are a member.)

STEPS IN SOLVING PROBLEMS

Mediation, due process hearings, and formal complaints all have the same purpose—to solve problems...

From time to time you and the school staff may disagree about what is fair or best for your child. Some problems can be solved quickly. Others will take more time and effort.

The first step in solving a problem is to make sure that everyone understands the problem. Asking for a meeting is often the best thing to do when you don't understand something or think the school doesn't understand you. Knowing whom to call or talk to is very important. Many times talking to the right person will help.

If the problem has to do with something in the classroom, take these steps:

- First, talk to your child's teacher.
- Then, talk to the principal of the school.
- Next, call the ESE administrator in your local school district office.

If the problem has to do with finding appropriate services for your child, evaluation, or eligibility, take these steps:

- First, talk to the guidance counselor or principal of the school.
- Then, contact the person in charge of evaluations or eligibility staffings in your local school district office.
- Next, call the ESE administrator in your local school district office.
- Then, contact the superintendent of your school district.

If the problem has to do with the IEP or changing your child's services or placement, take these steps:

- First, talk with your child's teacher.
- Next, talk with the principal of the school.
- Then, ask for an IEP meeting.
- Next, contact the ESE administrator in the local school district office.
- Then, contact the superintendent of the school district.

If other problems come up, find out who has the power to make decisions about those problems and talk to that person. Taking a complaint to someone who cannot make decisions is a waste of time for both you and your child.

If talking to people and attending meetings do not solve the problems, here are other steps you can take:

- If your child's evaluation or service has not begun yet, you may revoke (take back) your consent to it.
- You may ask for another evaluation or an ***independent educational evaluation***. (See the sample letter on page 158.)
- You may ask for free mediation services. (See page 100.)

It usually helps to take these actions in writing. Be sure to give your reasons and to ask for a written answer.

If you and the school district are still not able to solve the problem,you may decide to take one of these steps, depending on the type of problem:

- If you and the school district cannot resolve a disagreement about your child's evaluation, eligibility, placement, services, or IEP, you or the school district may ask for a due process hearing. (See page 101.)
- If you believe that the school district has violated a *law* related to the education of children with disabilities, you may file a formal ***complaint*** (See page 106.)

Mediation can be used to resolve either type of problem. Mediation, due process hearings, and formal complaints all have the same purpose—to solve problems. They are not designed to punish the school or anyone else. They are designed to ensure that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education.

MEDIATION

Mediation can help you improve your working relationship with the people at your child's school.

One way to solve problems is mediation. During mediation sessions, a trained, ***impartial*** mediator will help you and the school district resolve your disagreement about the identification, evaluation, placement, or free appropriate public education of your child. You may ask for mediation at any time—even at the same time that you ask for a due process hearing or file a complaint.

For mediation to occur, both you and the school district must agree to it. After you and the district send a request for mediation to the Florida Department of Education, DOE will assign a mediator. The mediator will contact you and the district to set up a mediation session. Sessions usually last three or four hours. What happens during a mediation session is ***confidential***.

The purpose of mediation is not for one side to win, but for both sides to come to agreement. The mediation session will give you and the school district a chance to

- talk about the problem
- tell your points of view
- come to an agreement that is best for your child

The mediator will not decide how to solve the problem. The mediator will help you and the school (or district) staff come up with ideas for solving the problem. There are several advantages to mediation:

- Mediation services are free for parents.
- Often, disagreements are solved more quickly through mediation than they are through due process or formal complaint procedures.
- Mediation may help improve your working relationship with the people at your child's school. This can be very important, since your relationship with the school district may last many years.

If you and the school district do not reach an agreement through mediation, you may still ask for a due process hearing or file a complaint.

See page 28 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records*.

DUE PROCESS HEARING

A hearing should be held only when there is no other way for you and the school to agree...

The right to a due process hearing is given to parents and school districts as a way of helping them resolve disagreements about a child's evaluation, eligibility, placement, services, or IEP. The due process hearing is a meeting. It is run by a person called an ***administrative law judge***. The administrative law judge cannot work for the local school system. The administrative law judge cannot know the student or be a friend or relative of the family. At the hearing, the administrative law judge will

- listen to you tell what you want and why
- look at the school district's records and your records
- listen to people from the school district explain their point of view
- ask questions

After the hearing, the administrative law judge will make decisions based on the laws and rules—and based on what seems best for your child.

The due process hearing is not a trial or court. However, **as in court, certain rules apply**:

- You have the right to have a lawyer or other person to help you.
- A lawyer will represent the school district.
- You and the school district may have ***witnesses*** to help explain things to the administrative law judge.
- You and the school district may show ***evidence*** to the administrative law judge.

It can take a lot of time and work to hold a due process hearing. It can also be very hard to follow all the rules for a hearing. A hearing should only be held when there is no other way for you and the school district to solve your disagreement.

It may take up to 45 days from the time you ask for a hearing to actually have the hearing and get a decision from the administrative law judge. During this time, your child will stay in his or her present placement, if he or she is in school. This is called your child's ***stay put*** placement. Of course, you and the school district can agree to make a change if you both feel it is a good idea. Otherwise, no change can be made until after the administrative law judge has made a decision. If your child is not already in school, the school district must offer your child a placement until the administrative law judge makes a decision.

While you are waiting for the hearing, you can try to work things out in other ways. You can use some of the ideas for **solving problems** on page 98. If you and the school district agree, you can try mediation. (See page 100.) You can also ask for mediation during a due process hearing, or at any other time. If mediation does not work, you can still have a due process hearing.

BEFORE THE HEARING

If you ask for a hearing, you will need to fill out a request for due process hearing form. (See the sample form on page 160.) Call the ESE administrator in your local school district office before you send in the form. Let him or her know what you plan to do. If the school district staff are asking for the hearing, they will send you a written notice. In either case, there are many things you will need to do to get ready for the hearing.

Decide about Getting Help

Because it is important that you know how to present your case at the hearing, you will probably want to have someone help you get ready. You will also probably want someone to go to the hearing with you. There are many places to get help.

- The school district will give you a list of places to get free or low-cost legal services. Ask for this list.
- Many of the groups listed in the Directory that begins on page 145 will help you to get ready for a hearing. (Sometimes people from these groups are called "advocates.")
- Check with a local college or university. Sometimes a professor in the special education department will be able to help you.

You do not have to have a lawyer or other advisor, but many times it will be helpful. The school district staff will have a lawyer to help them.

Check Time, Place, and Other Details

The time and place for the hearing must be set so that you can be there. You will decide whether your child should be at the hearing. You will also be asked to decide whether the hearing should be open or closed to the public.

Collect Evidence

At the hearing, you will try to prove to the administrative law judge that you are right. The school district staff will try to prove they are right. You will need evidence to show to the administrative law judge.

Evidence is material that helps to explain your point of view. Here are some types of evidence:

- evaluation reports
- samples of your child's work
- records
- pictures
- letters
- tape recordings
- notes

The evidence can come from your Parents' Record file, from the school, or from a place such as a doctor's office or day care center. You must show all your evidence to the school district at least five days before the hearing. If you do not do this, you cannot show the evidence to the administrative law judge. The school district staff must show you all their evidence five days before the hearing. If they do not do this, they cannot show their evidence to the administrative law judge.

Get Witnesses

You will want to have other people help explain your point of view to the administrative law judge. Witnesses can be

- friends or relatives
- experts—people with special training in ESE
- people from the school
- people from outside the school who have worked with your child

You will want to remember these rules about witnesses:

- You and the school district staff must give each other a list of your witnesses at least five days before the hearing.
- You should have a witness to talk about each piece of evidence you plan to use. For example, if you use an evaluation report as evidence, the person who wrote the report should be a witness at the hearing.
- If someone refuses to be a witness for you, the administrative law judge can make that person come to the hearing.

DURING THE HEARING

The administrative law judge will run the hearing. There are several ways to do this. However, these things will happen in every hearing.

- You and the school district staff will be asked to explain the problem and what you want to happen.
- You will explain your point of view, ask your witnesses questions, and show your evidence.
- The school district staff will explain their point of view, ask their witnesses questions, and show their evidence.
- You will ask questions of the school district's witnesses.
- The school will ask questions of your witnesses.
- The administrative law judge may ask questions of anybody and look at the evidence.
- You and the school district will get another chance to explain your point of view.

If you think that anything about the hearing is unfair, tell the administrative law judge right away.

AFTER THE HEARING

The administrative law judge will not make the decision during the hearing. You and the school district will have to wait to get a written decision. The decision should come to you no later than 45 days after you first asked for the hearing. The administrative law judge's written report will

- list the facts—the things he or she found to be true
- give the reasons for his or her decisions—the laws or rules that he or she used
- state the decisions he or she has made to solve the problem

Both you and the school district will get free written copies of this report. If you prefer, you may ask for a free taped version of the report. You also may ask for a free written or taped, word-for-word record of the hearing.

If you do not agree with the administrative law judge's decision, or if you feel the hearing was unfair, you have the right to go to court. You have several choices:

- You may file an appeal and ask for a trial in federal district court. (You must file a written notice within 30 days of the time you get a copy of the administrative law judge's decision.)

- You may file an appeal and request a trial in state circuit court. (You must file a written notice within 30 days of the time you get a copy of the administrative law judge's decision.)
- You may request that the decision be reviewed by the state district court of appeal.

Before filing an appeal, you should get legal help.

Note: School districts are also allowed to file appeals.

See pages 29 & 30 of the booklet ***Parents' Educational Records.***

FORMAL WRITTEN COMPLAINT

Parents may also try to solve problems by filing a formal complaint...

Mediation and due process hearings are designed to help parents and schools solve problems. Parents may also try to solve problems by filing a formal complaint with the Florida Department of Education (DOE). (See the sample letter on page 162.) You should only file a complaint if you believe the school district has violated the requirements of IDEA or some other federal or state *law* relating to the education of students with disabilities. You will probably want to call **DOE at 850-488-1216** for more information before filing a complaint.

DOE staff will encourage you to try mediation or other methods of solving the problem. However, if you decide to file a formal written complaint, your complaint must

- describe how the school district has violated a requirement of IDEA or another law
- explain the facts of the situation as you understand them
- be about a violation of law that occurred not more than one year before you filed the complaint (or not more than three years if you are requesting ***compensatory services***)

During the complaint process, DOE will ask you to explain your complaint over the phone or in writing. DOE will investigate to find out if the school district has broken the law. Someone from DOE may visit the school. Within 60 days after the date of your complaint, DOE will issue a written decision. The decision will

- list the facts—the things DOE found to be true
- give the reasons for DOE's decisions—the laws or rules used
- state the decisions DOE has made to solve the problem

If there is also a due process hearing about the issues, the issues will be decided through the due process hearing, not the complaint process. If the issues has already been decided through a due process hearing, the decision will not be reconsidered through the complaint process.

See pages 31 & 32 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

PLANNING YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION—PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

The process of planning your child's education was described in **chapter 1**. You and your child have specific procedural safeguards at each step. On the following pages, questions about your procedural safeguards are answered. If you have questions about the process, read **chapter 1** again or ask someone to help you.

1: REFERRAL FOR INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

A teacher, parent, or other person asks for a child to be given an individual evaluation.

How can parents participate?

- If your child is having difficulty in school, you may talk to the teacher or other school staff about getting help for your child, such as academic or behavioral interventions.
- You may refer your child for an individual evaluation. (See the sample letter on page 155.)
- You may ask for a meeting about the ***referral***.

What can parents do if there are problems?

- Talk with your child's teacher or the principal.
- Contact the ESE administrator in your local school district office.
- Write a letter. (See the sample letter on page 157.)
- Ask for free mediation services.

Who can ask for a due process hearing?

- You, if the school does not act on the referral.

2: INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

A way of collecting information about a child's strengths and learning needs. The information will be used in the next step, determining eligibility for ESE services.

Must the school give parents written notice?

- Yes, if the school plans to do an individual evaluation.
- Yes, if the school turns down your request for an individual evaluation.

Does the school need a parent's consent for individual evaluation?

- Yes. Even if you asked for the evaluation, the school will ask you to sign a consent form. You may refuse to consent. (However, if you do not respond at all to the notice asking for your consent, the school may do the evaluation anyway.)

How can parents participate?

- Ask someone at the school to explain what is planned for the evaluation.
- You may be asked to take your child to the evaluation or to stay with your child during the evaluation.
- You can give helpful information to the people who are doing the evaluation.

What can parents do if there are problems?

- Ask to talk with the people who will do, or have done, the evaluation.
- Discuss the evaluation with someone from your local school district office.
- You can revoke (take back) your consent before the evaluation takes place.
- Ask for an independent educational evaluation. (See page 115.) (See the sample letter on page 158.)
- Ask for free mediation services. (See page 100.)

Who can ask for a due process hearing?

- You, if you are not satisfied with any part of the evaluation.
- You, if the school district will not do an evaluation that you asked for.
- The school district, if you decide not to give consent for an evaluation.
- The school district, if the school district refuses to pay for an independent educational evaluation.

3: ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

A team that includes the parent and school staff decides if a child is eligible for ESE services.

Must the school give parents written notice of the eligibility staffing meeting?
- Yes.

Does the school need parents' consent to hold an eligibility staffing meeting?
- No.

Must parents be invited to the eligibility staffing meeting?
- Yes.

How can parents participate?
- Go to the meeting and give helpful information to the rest of the members of the team.

Will the school give parents written notice of the results of the meeting?
- Yes. The school must tell you what decisions were made at the eligibility staffing meeting, and why. This includes telling you what special programs, if any, your child is eligible for.

What can parents do if there are problems?
- Ask for a meeting so you can get more information or state your point of view.
- Contact the principal.
- Contact the ESE administrator in your local school district office.
- Ask for an independent educational evaluation. (See page 115.) (See the sample letter on page 158.)
- Ask for free mediation services. (See page 100.)

Who can ask for a due process hearing?
- You, if the school district says your child has a disability and is eligible for ESE services but you disagree.
- You, if the school district says your child is not eligible for ESE services but you disagree.
- You if the school district refuses to pay for an independent educational evaluation you have asked for.

4: DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST IEP

A team writes a plan that describes the learning needs of a child with a disability, the ESE services the child will receive, and the child's proposed placement.

Must parents be invited to the IEP meeting?

- Yes. One invitation to the meeting must be in writing; a second invitation may be given by telephone, by electronic mail, or in person.

Does the school need parents' consent to hold the IEP meeting?

- No. If you choose not to attend the IEP meeting, the rest of the team may go ahead and write the IEP without you.

How can parents participate?

- You will want to go to the meeting and help write the IEP. If the school staff suggests a meeting time that is not good for you, ask for a different time.
- If it is impossible for you to go to the IEP meeting, work with the school through telephone calls, electronic mail, or other methods.

What can parents do if there are problems?

- Ask for another IEP meeting. (See the sample letter on page 156.)
- Ask someone from outside the school to help you at the IEP meeting.
- Contact the ESE administrator in your local school district office.
- Ask for free mediation services. (See page 100.)

Who can ask for a due process hearing?

- You or the school district, if you cannot agree on the services, placement, or other parts of the IEP.

STEP 5: CONSENT FOR PLACEMENT; SERVICES BEGIN

Parents' give permission for ESE services to be provided, then services begin.

Does the school need parents' consent for the child's first placement?

- Yes, the school **does need** your written consent for your child's **first** ESE placement. ESE services cannot begin until you give your signed consent for placement or until an administrative law judge decides through a due process hearing that your child should receive services.
- The school **does not** need your consent to *change* your child's services or placement after your child's first ESE placement. However, the school must invite you to any meeting at which such a change will be discussed. The school must also give you notice of such a change.

How can parents participate?

- Visit the classroom. (Call first.)
- Keep in touch with the teachers.
- Help your child at home—ask the teachers how you can do this.
- Let the school know what your child is doing at home.

What can parents do if there are problems?

- Talk to the teacher.
- Talk to the principal.
- Visit the classroom. (Call first.)
- Read the IEP again to see if it is being carried out the way it was written.
- Ask for another IEP meeting to talk about making changes in your child's services or placement, or in other parts of the IEP. (See the sample letter on page 156.)
- Contact the ESE administrator in your local school district office.
- Ask for free mediation services. (See page 100.)

Who can ask for a due process hearing?

- You, if you have good reason to believe your child is not getting the services listed on the IEP.
- You, if you believe your child should be getting more, or different, services than those already on the IEP and the school district disagrees with you.
- The school district, if you decide not to give your consent for ESE services but the school district feels your child needs services.

CONTINUING YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION—PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

After your child is placed and receives services for the first time, you will have many chances to participate in your child's education. The team will develop a new IEP for your child at least every 12 months, and your child will be reevaluated at least every three years. Your rights during these parts of the process are described below. If you have questions, go back to **chapter 1** or ask someone to help you. (See the Directory that begins on page 141 for lists of groups that can help.)

6: DEVELOPMENT OF NEW IEP; IEP REVIEW

An IEP meeting is held at least every 12 months to talk about a child's services and placement and to write a new IEP. However, an IEP review meeting may be held before the 12 months is up, if needed, to consider changing a child's services or placement. Changes in services or placement, including dismissal, can only be decided at an IEP meeting.

Must parents be invited to the IEP meeting?

- Yes. The school must ask you to go to all IEP meetings. One invitation must be in writing, but another may be given by telephone or electronic mail, or in person.
- The school must invite you to any meeting related to the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child, or to the provision of a free appropriate public education to your child.
- The school staff do not have to include you in informal conversations or in meetings about teaching methods, lesson plans, or service provision if those issues are not addressed in your child's IEP. The school staff also do not have to include you in meetings at which they develop a proposal or a response to a proposal that will be discussed at a later meeting to which you will be invited.

Does the school need parents' consent to hold an IEP meeting?

- No. If you choose not to attend the IEP meeting, the rest of the team may go ahead and write the IEP without you.

How can parents participate?

- You will want to go to the meeting and help write your child's new IEP each year.
- You may ask for an IEP review meeting any time you think changes are needed in your child's services, placement, or other parts of the IEP.

Does the school need parents' consent to change a child's services or placement or to dismiss a child from ESE services?

- No, the school does not need your consent to change your child's services or placement after your child's first ESE placement.

Must the school give parents written notice of changes in a child's services or placement?

- Yes. The school will send you a written notice if the IEP team decides to change your child's free appropriate public education, including changing your child's services or placement or dismissing your child from any or all of his or her ESE services.

What can parents do if there are problems?

- Ask for another IEP meeting.
- Talk with the principal.
- Talk with the ESE administrator in your local school district office.
- Write a letter that explains what changes you want in the IEP. (See the sample letter on page 156.)
- Write a letter asking the school to change the decision. (See the sample letter on page 157.)
- Ask for free mediation services. (See page 100.)

Who can ask for a due process hearing?

- You, if the school district wants to make changes you do not agree with.
- You, if the school district refuses to make changes you have asked for.
- The school district, if there are disagreements that cannot be settled in any other way.

7: REEVALUATION

After the initial evaluation, another evaluation must be done at least every three years. This is called a __reevaluation__. The reevaluation may or may not include any new tests or other evaluation activities.

How can parents participate?

- Ask someone at the school to explain what is planned for the evaluation.
- You may be asked to take your child to the evaluation or to stay with your child during the evaluation.
- You may share information with the people doing the reevaluation.
- You may ask for a reevaluation before the three years is up if you think one is needed.

Must the school give parents written notice?

- Yes, the school staff must let you know that they plan to do a reevaluation.
- The school staff must let you know if they have decided not to do any new tests or other evaluations as part of the three-year reevaluation.
- The school staff must let you know if they refuse to do a reevaluation you have asked for.

Does the school need parents' consent?

- The school needs your consent to do any tests or other individual evaluations of your child. You may refuse to consent. (However, if you do not respond at all to the notice asking for your consent, the school may do the tests or other evaluations anyway.)
- The school does not need your consent to review evaluation information the school already has.
- The school does not need your consent to *not* do any tests or other individual evaluations as part of the reevaluation. However, if you ask the school to do new tests or other individual evaluations, the school will.

What can parents do if there are problems?

- Ask someone at the school to explain the purpose of the reevaluation.
- Talk with the people who will do, or have done, the reevaluation.
- Discuss the reevaluation with someone from your local school district office.
- If the school decides not to do any tests or other evaluations as part of the reevaluation, and you disagree, write a letter asking the school to change that decision. (See the sample letter on page 157.)
- Ask for an independent educational evaluation. (See page 115.) (See the sample letter on page 158.)
- Ask for free mediation services. (See page 100.)

Who can ask for a due process hearing?

- You, if you are not satisfied with the results of the reevaluation.
- You, if the school district chooses not to do a reevaluation that you have asked for.
- You, if the school district refuses to do tests or other individual evaluations as part of the reevaluation.
- You if the school district refuses to pay for an independent educational evaluation.
- The school district, if you decide not to give consent for an evaluation.
- The school district, if the school district refuses to pay for an independent educational evaluation that you have asked for.

What happens after reevaluation?

- The results will be used at an IEP meeting or an eligibility staffing meeting.

INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

It is very important that you know who will pay for the independent evaluation before it is actually done...

At any time, you can pay to have your child privately tested and bring the results of that testing to an eligibility staffing or an IEP meeting. The team will consider the information you have provided. However, there is a special situation in which the school district may agree to pay for private testing. If the school has already done an individual evaluation of your child and you disagree with the results of that evaluation, you can ask the district to pay for an independent educational evaluation (IEE). An IEE is an evaluation done by a person who does not work for the school system. You may ask for an IEE if you have good reason to believe that the school's evaluation of your child is

- not complete
- not correct
- not fair

When you ask for an IEE, you are really asking for a second opinion. You will want to do these things *before* asking for an IEE:

- Study the school's evaluation carefully.
- Be able to explain why you think the school's evaluation is not correct, not complete, or not fair.
- Ask people at the school to talk with you about their evaluation. They may be able to clear up your concerns.
- Ask the school to do another evaluation or to add to the evaluation that has already been done.
- Talk with the ESE administrator in your local school district office.

If you and the school district still cannot agree about the school's evaluation, and you decide to ask the district to pay for an IEE, you should do several things:

- First, call the ESE administrator and let him or her know about your decision.
- Next, ask for the IEE in writing—some school districts have a form you can use; if not, write a letter like the sample letter on page 158.
- Then, wait for a letter from the school district staff that tells you what they have decided; do not have the IEE done until you hear from the school district.
- You may ask for free mediation services at any time to help you and the school district solve the disagreement. (See page 100.)
- Finally, keep in mind that you or the school district may choose to ask for a due process hearing to decide who will pay for the IEE.

An IEE may cost a lot of money. It is very important that you know who will pay for the IEE before it is actually done. If you and the school district cannot agree on who will pay, mediation or a due process hearing may be needed.

- The school district will pay for the IEE if the district agrees to do so, or if an administrative law judge orders the district to pay as the result of a due process hearing. The school district staff will let you know if they refuse to pay for the IEE. If they refuse, they must request a due process hearing to prove their evaluation is appropriate.
- You will pay for the IEE if you choose to, or if an administrative law judge decides, as the result of a due process hearing, that the school district's evaluation is complete, correct, and fair.

The person you choose to do the IEE must be fully trained and qualified. If the person is not fully qualified, the school district will not pay for the IEE. The school district will give you a list of outside persons who are qualified to do IEEs, or a list of the qualifications such people must have. Many times the school district will help you set up the IEE.

No matter who pays for the IEE, the results will become part of your child's record. The team will use the results to help them make decisions and plans for your child's education.

See pages 22 & 23 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records*.

DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Parents and teachers know how important it is for schools to be safe...

Parents and teachers know how important it is for schools to be safe and orderly. Since discipline problems make it hard for teachers to teach and for children to learn, all children must obey school rules. However, there are times when discipline for children with disabilities may be different than discipline for other students. These are cases in which the punishment for misbehavior is removal from school—suspension or expulsion. This is because children with disabilities still need and have the right to receive ESE services, even if they have been removed from their placement for disciplinary reasons.

A child with a disability may be removed from the current placement for disciplinary reasons for up to 10 school days in a given school year, and for more days for separate acts of misconduct, so long as the removals do not constitute a pattern. However, if a child with a disability is removed from school for more than 10 days during a given school year, the child must continue to receive services that will contribute to his or her progress in the general curriculum and toward his or her annual goals.

Here are the factors that determine when a child with a disability may be removed from his or her current placement for disciplinary reasons:

- the length of the removal from school
- whether the child's misbehavior is a ***manifestation*** (or result) of the child's disability
- whether the misbehavior involved weapons or illegal substances (such as drugs), or whether there is a good chance of injury to the child or others
- whether the removal is a change in placement

The chart on the next page describes the conditions under which a child with a disability may be removed from school for disciplinary reasons.

DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

During the first 10 *cumulative* days of removal during a school year...	The school does not have to provide services if services are not provided to students without disabilities who have been similarly removed.
During any removal of less than 11 days in a row that would result in a total of more than 10 cumulative school days in a school year, beginning on the 11th cumulative school day of removal, educational *services must be provided.*	1. The school must provide services that the student needs to make progress in the general curriculum and toward meeting his or her annual goals. School personnel decide which services the student needs. 2. The IEP team must meet to develop a plan for conducting a ***functional behavioral assessment*** and developing a ***behavioral intervention plan*** if one has not been done, or to review the existing plan and its implementation and change it as needed.
During any removal of more than 10 days in a row... ***or*** **During a removal that is part of a pattern of removals that together comprise more than 10 school days in a given school year and that constitute a pattern because of the length of each removal, the total amount of time during the school year the student is removed, or the proximity of the removals to one another.** **Both of these situations are changes of placement.** ***Services must be provided!***	1. The school must provide services that the student needs to make progress in the general curriculum and toward meeting his or her annual goals. The IEP team decides which services the student needs. 2. The IEP team must meet to develop a plan for conducting a functional behavioral assessment and developing a behavioral intervention plan if one has not been done, or to review the existing plan and its implementation and change it as needed. 3. The IEP team must conduct a manifestation determination review within 10 days of the notice of the proposed change of placement to find out if the misbehavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. a. If the misbehavior is **not** a manifestation of the student's disability, the student may be disciplined in the same manner as a student without a disability, but the student must continue to receive educational services during the removal. b. If the misbehavior is a manifestation of the student's disability and did not involve weapons or drugs, and there is no substantial likelihood of injury to the student or others, the student may be returned to the current placement or a change of placement may be initiated through regular change of placement procedures of the IEP team. If there were deficiencies in the IEP or placement, the school must remedy the deficiencies. c. If the misbehavior is a manifestation of the student's disability and involved weapons or drugs, the IEP team determines an interim alternative educational setting. d. If the misbehavior is a manifestation of the student's disability and a hearing officer determines the student may be dangerous to himself or others, school personnel recommend an interim alternative placement to a hearing officer, who makes the placement decision.

SCHOOL RECORDS

You have the right to see and read any record the school keeps on your child...

Schools keep many written records about students with disabilities. These records contain personal, private information about your child. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other laws give parents and students many rights related to school records. These rights include

- the right to see your child's records
- the right to have school records kept confidential
- the right to ask that school records be changed
- the right to have a hearing about school records

If you believe the school district has violated school records laws, you may file a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office of the United States Department of Education.

THE RIGHT TO SEE YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS

You have the right to see and read any record the school keeps on your child. You may also have someone else—a friend, relative, or advisor—look at the records if you wish.

- If you ask, the school staff must tell you what records they have on your child. They will also tell you where the records are kept.
- If you ask to see your chid's records, the school must show you the records without unnecessary delay and before any meeting about an IEP or a due process hearing. In any case, the school must show you the records within 30 days of when you ask to see them.
- The school cannot destroy any records you ask to see before you see them.
- You may ask to have a copy of any record kept by the school. (There may be a small copying charge.)

Someone from the school will explain what is in the records and anything you don't understand.

THE RIGHT TO HAVE SCHOOL RECORDS KEPT CONFIDENTIAL

School records that have your child's name, birth date, address, or social security number—or your name—on them must be kept confidential. This means these records can only be shown or sent to certain people under certain conditions, such as

- people at the school or school district who have a good reason for seeing them
- other schools or colleges where your child seeks to enroll
- federal, state, or local education authorities
- organizations to which your child has applied for education financial aid
- organizations doing education research

Also, school districts may report crimes committed by juveniles to law enforcement authorities and under certain circumstances may transmit ESE and discipline records to law enforcement agencies.

The school staff will keep a list of who they show or send your child's records to. This list will include the name of the person, when the person used the records, and why the person needed the records. (Your name and the names of people who work at the school do not have to go on this list.) This list will be kept with your child's records, where you can see it.

If someone who is not authorized to see the records wants to see them, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This form will tell you

- who is to get the school records
- which school records they will get
- why they need the school records

Before deciding to sign or not sign the form, you may want to ask

- to see the records yourself
- to talk to the person who wants the records
- to discuss the records with someone at the school
- whether the records will be shown to the person or whether copies will be sent to the person to keep

THE RIGHT TO ASK THAT SCHOOL RECORDS BE CHANGED

If you see something in the school records that you feel is unfair to your child, you can ask that the records be changed. You should be able to tell why you think there is a problem with the record. You can ask to have something

- added to the record
- taken out of the record
- changed in the record

You should ask for any of these actions in writing. (See the sample letter on page 159.) The school staff will either do what you have asked or send you a letter telling you why they refuse to make the change. They will also tell you that you have a right to a hearing.

THE RIGHT TO HAVE A HEARING ABOUT SCHOOL RECORDS

You have the right to a hearing if the school refuses to make changes you have asked for in your child's records. This is not a due process hearing. Before asking for this kind of hearing, you will want to

- be sure that you fully understand what the records say—ask someone at the school or outside the school to go over the records with you
- talk to the school principal about the problem—make sure he or she understands what you want and why
- discuss the problem with the ESE administrator in your local school district office
- write a letter about what you want—and ask for a written answer

No matter what is decided at the hearing, you may put a note in your child's school record to explain your point of view. Then whenever the record is released, your note will be released with it.

See pages 26 & 27 of the booklet *Parents' Educational Records.*

Note: The school is allowed to keep a permanent record with some information on your child without time limit. Once information that is *not* part of the permanent record is no longer needed to provide educational services to your child, the school staff must destroy it, if you ask them to. However, you will want to think carefully before having records destroyed. They may be needed later to get other kinds of help, like Social Security benefits, for your child.

FINAL COMMENT

This chapter has described many of your rights as the parent of a child with a disability. Some of these rights are difficult to understand. The school staff should explain these rights to you as they work with your child. Don't be afraid to ask questions. You may want to ask someone at the school to talk with you about the information in this chapter.

Chapter 5 tells how you can get more information about ESE and about your rights.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

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5.
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INTRODUCTION

We hope that the information in this chapter will help you to help your child...

The information in this chapter adds to, or helps to explain, **chapters 1**, **2**, **3**, and **4**. This chapter is divided into four parts:

- Parents' Dictionary (page 129) gives the meaning of all the underlined words in this book. These words are often used by schools to describe the exceptional student education (ESE) process and children with disabilities.
- Reading Materials for Parents (page 141) is a list of written materials that may help you.
- Where to Go for Help (page 145) lists some groups and agencies that can give you more information.
- Sample Letters (page 153) can help you take the actions described in **chapter 4**.

PARENTS' DICTIONARY

On the next several pages you will find definitions of words used by people who work with children with disabilities. Each of these words is also used in **chapters 1, 2, 3,** or **4**.

The definitions are simplified for use in this book. Different school districts may use these words in somewhat different ways. Always feel free to ask for definitions of words being used to describe your child or your child's education.

Academic—Having to do with subjects such as reading, writing, math, social studies, and science.

Accommodation—A different way of doing something that takes into account a person's disability. When a student with a visual impairment studies by listening to a recording of a textbook, the student is using an accommodation. Accommodations are changes in *how* a student is taught or tested. Accommodations do not change the requirements of a course or the standards the student must meet. Compare with "modification."

Administrative Law Judge—The person who is in charge of a due process hearing and who makes the decisions after the hearing. The administrative law judge cannot work for the local school district. He or she cannot know the student or be a friend or relative of the family. He or she is a person who is impartial—fair to both parents and the school district.

Age of Majority—The age when a person becomes a legal adult. The rights of the parent of a student with a disability transfer to the student when the student reaches the age of majority. In Florida, this is 18 years of age. See also "transfer of rights."

Age-Appropriate—Describes materials, activities, and experiences that are useful and suitable for persons of a particular age. For example, age-appropriate books for a teenager would be different than age-appropriate books for a seven-year old, even if the teenager reads on a second-grade level.

Alternate Assessment—An assessment that is used for a student with a disability when a standard state- or districtwide assessment is not appropriate for that student. See "assessment."

Annual Goal—See "measurable annual goal."

Appeal—A written request for a court to review the decision of an administrative law judge in a due process hearing.

Assessment—A way of collecting information about what a student knows and can do and what a student still needs to learn. Assessment may include giving tests, observing the student, and looking at a student's portfolio or work samples.

Assistive Technology—Assistive technology devices and/or services. See below.

Assistive Technology Device—Equipment that is used to maintain or increase the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.

Assistive Technology Service—A service that directly helps a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. This includes evaluating assistive technology needs; purchasing equipment; selecting, fitting, and repairing equipment; and training the child, family, teachers, employers, or others in the use of the equipment.

Autistic—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student who has autism has difficulty communicating and interacting with others. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students with autism, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)—A plan that helps a student with a disability to decrease his or her problem behaviors. The BIP includes strategies the student will be taught that will allow the student to stop the problem behaviors or replace them with other behaviors. The BIP also includes the method for determining the student's progress in decreasing the problem behavior.

Benchmarks —Statements in the IEP that describe major milestones a student must reach in order to achieve one of his or her "measurable annual goals." An IEP must include either benchmarks *or* "short-term objectives."

Certificate of Completion—This certificate is given to students who pass the required courses in high school but fail to pass the state graduation test or achieve the grade point average required for a "standard diploma."

Change of Placement—A change in the type of placement listed on the IEP of a student with a disability. This includes a change from a more restrictive placement to a less restrictive placement, or vice versa. Change of placement must be determined during an IEP meeting.

Child Study Team—A group of people who help teachers meet the learning needs of their students. The team may refer a student for an "evaluation."

Community-Based Instruction (CBI)—Instruction that takes place in locations in the community and is designed to help students perform skills such as grocery shopping and using public transportation. CBI often includes training in the classroom followed by practice in community settings.

Compensatory Services—Services a school district provides to a student in order to make up for services not provided in the past.

Complaint—A parent's formal written claim that a school district has violated a law related to the education of students with disabilities. Also called "formal complaint" and "formal written complaint."

Confidential—Private, not to be seen by others. School records are confidential, so they may be read or used only by school staff members, parents, and others allowed to see them by law.

Consent—Parents' agreement to let the school take an action that affects their child's education. Consent is usually shown by the parent signing a form.

Continuum of Services—The range of possible placements for students with disabilities. It includes services provided in a general education classroom, some services provided in a general education classroom and some in a special class, services provided in a special school, and other placements.

Courses of Study—The courses a student age 14 or older plans to take in order to reach his or her desired post-school outcome.

Cumulative—Added together. If a child is suspended for three days in October, five days in January, and two days in May, the child has been suspended for 10 cumulative days.

Daily Living Skills—Skills in taking care of one's own personal needs as independently as possible. Examples include dressing for work, renting an apartment, and buying a bus pass.

Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing has a loss of some or all of the ability to hear. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Desired Post-School Outcome Statement—A statement that describes where a student would like to be within one to five years of leaving school. It is a vision of what that student wishes to become.

Developmentally Delayed—One of the ESE programs in Florida. This program is for children ages birth to five only. A child with a developmental delay is developing more slowly than his or her peers either mentally, emotionally, or physically. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students with developmental delays, a child must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Disability—A condition that makes it hard for a student to learn or do things in the same ways as most other students. A disability may be short-term or permanent.

Dismissal—A decision made at an IEP meeting to dismiss a student from ESE services because the student no longer needs those services. The IEP team reviews evaluations and other information about the student before making this decision. Parents will receive written notice before services are stopped.

Dual-Sensory Impaired (DSI)—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student with dual-sensory impairment is deaf-blind and has such severe problems with both seeing and hearing that the student cannot learn well in either a program for the deaf or hard-of-hearing or in a program for the visually impaired. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who have dual-sensory impairments, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Due Process Hearing—A formal meeting held to settle disagreements between parents and school districts about the evaluation, eligibility, placement, services, or

IEP of a child with a disability. The meeting is run by an administrative law judge.

Duration—On an IEP, this indicates the length of time a student with a disability is expected to need a service during the school year or extended school year.

Eligibility Criteria—The requirements a child must meet to be eligible for each exceptionality category (program). The eligibility criteria are listed in Florida's State Board of Education Rules.

Eligibility Staffing—A meeting at which the parents and a group of school staff members decide if a student is eligible for ESE services. This decision is based on evaluation reports and other information. To be eligible, the student must meet the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Eligible—Refers to a student who meets the requirements for and is in need of ESE programs and services. The decision is based on State Board of Education rules.

Emotional—Having to do with feelings and the way one responds to and expresses feelings.

Emotionally Handicapped—One of the ESE programs in Florida. It includes students who are "severely emotionally disturbed." A student who has an emotional handicap may seem to act differently, think differently, or have different feelings from most students. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who have emotional handicaps, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Employability Skills—Skills necessary to get and keep a job. These are not technical skills but social and verbal skills that would help a person work well with others, communicate with others, follow directions, and be on time.

ESE—See "exceptional student education."

ESE Administrator—The leader of a school district's ESE programs. This person works for the whole school district, not just one school.

Evaluation—A way of collecting information about a student's learning needs, strengths, and interests. It is used to help decide whether a student has a disability and is eligible for ESE programs and services. It may include giving individual tests, observing the child, looking at records, and talking with the student and parents.

Evidence—Pieces of written material (e.g., records, letters, notes, or work samples) that are used by parents or school districts in a due process hearing to help show that their point of view is the right one.

Exceptional Student—A student who has special learning needs as described in State Board of Education Rules. This includes students who have a disability. It also includes students who are gifted. A child does not have to be in school to be an "exceptional student."

Exceptional Student Education (ESE)—The name given in Florida to educational programs and services for students with special learning needs (including those who have disabilities and those who are gifted). It is sometimes called "special education."

Exceptionality—A disability or special learning need. Giftedness is also an exceptionality.

Family Support Plan (FSP)—A written plan that describes the concerns and needs of the family related to the development of an infant or toddler who has a disability or developmental delay. It lists the services to be provided to the child and the family. An FSP may also be used instead of an IEP for children who are three, four, or five years old.

FAPE—See "free appropriate public education."

Formal complaint—See "complaint."

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)— The words used in the federal law (IDEA) to describe the right of a student with a disability to special services that will meet his or her individual learning needs, at no cost to his parents.

Frequency—How often a service is provided, such as "twice a week."

FSP—See "family support plan."

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)—The process of gathering data about problem behaviors of students with disabilities. Information about when, where, and under what conditions the behaviors occur is included.

Functional Vocational Evaluation—An ongoing process that identifies a student's work-related skills, interests, and need for training.

GED Diploma—A high school diploma earned by a student who is at least 18 years old and who passes the Tests of General Educational Development.

General Educational Development Diploma—See "GED diploma."

General Curriculum—The things that most nondisabled students are studying. In Florida, the general curriculum is the Sunshine State Standards, which describe what students are expected to know and be able to do at various points in their education.

General Education—The classes and activities most students participate in. It includes academic and vocational education.

Gifted—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student who is gifted learns more easily than do other students. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who are gifted, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Hearing Officer—See "administrative law judge."

Homebound or Hospitalized—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student in this program must be taught at home or in a hospital for an extended period of time because of a severe illness, injury, or health problem. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who are homebound or hospitalized, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

IDEA—See "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act."

Identification—The determination that a student has a disability and what the disability is.

IEP—See "individual educational plan."

IEP Meeting—A meeting held at least every 12 months to write a student's IEP. Changes in a student's services or placement must be made at an IEP meeting.

IEP Review—A meeting held to discuss changing the IEP of a student with a disability. Any member of the IEP team, including the parent, may request an IEP review.

Impartial—Fair. An impartial person is one who does not take sides. For example, the person who runs a due process hearing must not work for the school district or be a friend of the parent.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)—An evaluation asked for by a student's parents and done by someone who does not work for the school district.

Independent Functioning—A student's skills in meeting his or her own needs, such as feeding, dressing, and toileting; traveling safely; and using time management and organizational strategies.

Individual Educational Plan (IEP)—A written plan that describes the individual learning needs of a student with disabilities and the ESE services, supports, aids, and accommodations and modifications that will be provided to that student.

Individual Evaluation—See "evaluation."

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—The most important United States law regarding the education of students with disabilities.

Initiation Date—The date, month, and year on which a service will begin for a student with a disability.

Interagency Responsibilities—Services listed on a Transition IEP that agencies have agreed to provide or help the school district provide.

Interventions—Strategies used to help a student make progress in learning or behavior. This term is often used for strategies implemented to help a student who has been referred, before or instead of evaluating the student's need for ESE services.

Job Coaching—Help for a student with disabilities in which a specially trained adult goes to the workplace with the student and helps the student to learn all the tasks that are part of that job.

Learning Disability—See "Specific Learning Disabilities."

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)—The school setting (placement) that allows a child with a disability to be educated to the greatest extent possible with children who do not have disabilities.

Linkages—Connections between students with disabilities and agencies that provide adult services.

Location—Where services will be provided, such as "general education classroom."

Manifestation—Result. If a child's misbehavior is a result of his or her disability, the misbehavior is called a "manifestation" of the disability.

Manifestation Determination Review—A meeting at which a team decides if a child's misbehavior is a result of his or her disability.

Matrix of Services—A funding document used in Florida to determine the ESE cost factor that will apply to the services and supports provided to some students with disabilities.

Measurable Annual Goal—A statement in an IEP of what a student needs to learn and should be able to learn within one year.

Mediation—A process in which parents and school personnel try to settle disagreements with the help of a person who has been trained to resolve conflicts.

Mentally Handicapped--One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student who has a mental handicap learns more slowly than other students do. This program includes three levels of student functioning: educable mentally handicapped, trainable mentally handicapped, and profoundly mentally handicapped. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who are mentally handicapped, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Modification—A change in the requirements of a course or the standards a student must meet. A change in *what* the student is taught or tested on. The change is based on the student's needs because of his or her disability. Compare with "accommodation."

Motor—Having to do with use of the large and small muscles to move parts of the body. Examples of motor skills are walking, holding and moving a pencil, and opening a door.

Mutually Agreeable—Acceptable to both the parents *and* the school. IEP meetings must be held at a time and place that is mutually agreeable.

Notice—A note or letter to parents about an action the school plans to take that will affect their child's education.

Occupational Therapy (OT)—Treatment for a student with a disability that helps the student to maintain, improve, restore, or develop skills needed for daily living, such as self-care and prevocational skills. These skills will help the student benefit from ESE services. Treatment is given by a licensed occupational therapist or licensed occupational therapy assistant. Occupational therapy is a related service. In order to be eligible for occupational therapy services, a student must meet all the requirements for an ESE program listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)—Instruction that provides students with realistic work experiences in order to help them acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to hold a job.

Orientation and Mobility Services—Services that help students with visual impairments learn to move about safely in school, home, and community.

Participation—Taking part in a task, such as making a decision or writing an IEP.

Physical—Having to do with the use or well-being of the body. An example of a physical skill is being able to sit in a chair with good balance and posture.

Physical Therapy (PT)—Treatment for a student with a disability that helps to maintain, improve, restore, or develop the student's movements and coordination so that he or she can benefit from ESE services. This treatment is given by a licensed physical therapist or licensed physical therapist assistant. Physical therapy is a related service. In order to be eligible for physical therapy services, a student must meet all the requirements for an ESE program listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Physically Impaired—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student with a physical impairment has an illness, injury, or condition that makes it hard for the student to learn in the same ways other students do. This program includes students who are orthopedically impaired, health impaired, or traumatic brain injured. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who have physical impairments, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Placement—The type of setting in which the child is to receive special services. The placement may include one or more than one classroom or other area in which the student is to receive services for a particular amount of time.

Post-School Activities—Activities a student would like to pursue after finishing high school. Some post-school activities are postsecondary education, continuing and adult education, vocational training, employment, adult services, independent living, recreation, and community participation.

Postsecondary Education—The next level of education after high school, such as college/university course work or vocational/technical training.

Pre-Academic—Having to do with skills a student needs to learn before he or she is ready to learn academic subjects, such as reading and math. Examples of pre-academic skills are knowing colors and holding a crayon or pencil correctly.

Present Levels of Educational Performance—Statements in an IEP that describe what a student can do or what he or she knows now.

Prevocational—Having to do with skills a student needs to learn before he or she is ready to learn job skills. Examples of prevocational skills are telling time, using a ruler to measure, and following directions.

Procedural Safeguards—Rules outlined in IDEA that give parents the rights to participate, have notice, and give consent. The procedural safeguards also determine how parents and schools can resolve disputes through mediation, due process, or complaint procedures.

Reevaluation—An evaluation that takes place after a student has already been receiving ESE services. A student with a disability must be reevaluated at least every three years to determine if the services he or she is receiving are still appropriate. Reevaluation may include new tests or other activities, or it may be based on review of data already available. See "evaluation."

Referral—A request that a child be given an individual evaluation. A referral may be made by a parent, a teacher, a doctor, or anyone who has worked with the child. Children do not have to be in school to be referred.

Related Services—Special help given to a student with a disability in addition to classroom teaching. Related services help a student benefit from instruction. Examples of related services are special transportation, social work services, physical and occupational therapy, and the services of readers for the blind.

Residential Setting—Where a person with a disability lives. Examples of residential settings include one's own home or apartment, a family care program, a foster care facility, a group home, and intermediate care facilities for the developmentally disabled (ICF/DD).

School Psychologist—A professional who conducts evaluations, especially intelligence testing. A school psychologist may also work with classroom teachers, parents, and school administrators on behavior assessments and behavior management.

School Social Worker—A professional who may provide services in the home, including parent-student conferences, family counseling, parent education, information and referral, social-developmental history, and behavior assessments, as well as services in the school and community, including parent groups.

Screening—A way of testing a group of students to find out if any of them need an individual evaluation.

Self-Advocacy—Actions a person with a disability takes to be sure his or her needs are understood and met, wishes are respected, and rights are honored.

Self-Help—Having to do with skills that allow a student to do things for himself. Examples of self-help skills are a student being able to dress or cross the street without help.

Sensory—Having to do with the use of the senses of hearing, seeing, touching (feeling), smelling, or tasting as a part of learning. An example of a sensory skill is being able to see the differences between letters of the alphabet.

Short-Term Objectives—Statements in an IEP that describe small, measurable steps a student must learn or master before the student can reach one of his or her “measurable annual goals.” An IEP must include either short-term objectives or "benchmarks."

Situational Vocational Assessment—A system of observation used to gather information about a student's work-related behavior in a controlled work environment.

Social—Having to do with a student's ability to get along with other people—adults or children. An example of a social skill is being able to play well with other children.

Special Certificate of Completion—This certificate is given to students with disabilities who pass the required ESE courses in high school but fail to master the Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma. See "certificate of completion," and "special diploma."

Special Diploma—The diploma given to students with disabilities who are not able to meet the regular Sunshine State Standards and receive a standard diploma. There are two types of special diploma, special diploma option 1 and special diploma option 2. To receive special diploma option 1, the student must meet the Sunshine State Standards for Students with Disabilities. Criteria for special diploma option 2 are based on the individual needs of the student.

Special Education—See "exceptional student education."

Specific Learning Disabilities—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student with a specific learning disability has average or above average ability but is still unable to learn things as easily as most other students do. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who have specific learning disabilities, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Speech and Language—Having to do with a student's ability to talk, write, listen, or read. This includes understanding others and making himself or herself understood. An example of a speech-language skill is being able to put words together into a sentence.

Speech and Language Impaired—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student who has a speech or language impairment has problems talking so that he or she can be understood or understanding what others are saying. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students with speech-language impairments, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Speech-Language Pathologist—A professional trained to identify and treat communication disorders. Speech-language pathologists assist persons with speech and language disorders. They work with classroom teachers to help children with communication problems and to develop lessons on the communication process. They also work with parents to understand and help their children who have communication disorders.

Staffing—See "eligibility staffing."

Standard Diploma—Diploma granted to students who earn a specified number of credits and grade point average, meet the regular Sunshine State Standards, and pass the state graduation test. This is the general education diploma.

State Board of Education Rules—The rules developed to implement Florida's laws related to education.

Stay-Put Placement—The child's current placement, which the child stays in while a disagreement is being resolved through a due process hearing.

Sunshine State Standards—A set of objectives that describe what Florida's students are expected to know and be able to do at certain stages of their school career. Most students with disabilities are able to meet these standards if they have the right services and accommodations.

Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma—A set of objectives students with disabilities in Florida work on if they cannot meet the regular Sunshine State Standards.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Benefits—Benefits paid to children with disabilities who are under age 18 and whose families have limited income. When a young person turns 18, and the income of his or her parents are no longer considered, the young person becomes a family of one. A young adult who was not eligible for SSI before his or her 18th birthday because his or her parents' income was too high may become eligible at 18 and should reapply.

Supplementary Aids and Services—Aids and services provided in general education classes or other education-related settings to enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students. These are listed in the IEP.

Supported Employment—Competitive work at or above minimum wage that provides regular opportunities for interaction with nondisabled people. Supported employment gives people with disabilities help in getting and keeping a job.

Supports for School Personnel—Support that enables a general education or ESE teacher to help a child progress in the general or special education curriculum. These are listed in the IEP.

Transfer of Rights—The shift of rights from the parent of a student with a disability to the student when the student reaches the "age of majority."

Transition IEP—The IEP used for students age 14 and older. The transition IEP helps prepare students for life after school.

Transition IEP Meeting—An IEP meeting for a student age 14 or older. A major purpose of this meeting is to help plan a young person's move into adult life.

Transition Service Needs—See "courses of study."

Transition Services—Activities that help a student move from school to post-school activities.

Visually Impaired—One of the ESE programs in Florida. A student with a visual impairment has a loss of some or all of the ability to see. This includes students who are blind or partially sighted. In order to be eligible for programs and services for students who have visual impairments, a student must meet all the requirements listed in the Florida State Board of Education Rules.

Vocational—Having to do with skills needed for a trade or technical career. Examples of vocational skills are typing and carpentry.

Witnesses—Persons who can make statements in a due process hearing that will help to prove to the administrative law judge that a parent's or a school district's point of view is the correct one.

READING MATERIALS FOR PARENTS

Below is a list of reading materials about ESE and people with disabilities. Some of these materials are free. Many are available from the Clearinghouse Information Center (CIC). (See page 138 under **Collections.**) Important **Laws and Rules** are listed on page 139.

BOOKS AND NEWSLETTERS

Clearinghouse Information Center Publications Index. Index of mostly free materials on programs for students with disabilities and many other topics. Available from CIC [telephone: 850-488-1879] [e-mail: cicbiscs@mail.doe.state.fl.us] [website: www.firn.edu/doe/commhome].

Diploma Decisions for Students with Disabilities—What Parents Need to Know. Available in English and Spanish from CIC.

Disability Information at Your Fingertips: A Guide to Toll-Free Telephone Resources. Available from Disability Resources, Four Glatter Lane, Centereach, NY 11720 [telephone: (631) 585-0290] [website: www.disabilityresources.org].

Exceptional Parent (magazine for families). To subscribe, write to 2078 Marion, OH 43305-2178 [telephone: (877) 372-7368] [website: www.eparent.com].

Fact sheets on self-advocacy and other topics. Available from The Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, 2671 Executive Center Circle, West, Suite 100, Tallahassee, FL 32301-5024 [telephone: (850) 488-9071; North Florida—(800) 342-0823; South Florida—(800) 350-4566].

First Steps: A Guide for Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities. Available from Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, 124 Marriott Drive, Suite 203, Tallahassee, FL 32301-2918 [telephone: (850) 488-4180] [website: www.fddc.org].

For Parents of Florida's Infants and Toddlers...An Information Booklet: Early Intervention Services for Your Young Child with Special Needs. Available in English and Spanish from CIC.

For Parents of Florida's Students with Disabilities: Parents' Educational Records. A booklet of forms that will help you keep records of your child's education. It goes with this book. Available in English and Spanish from CIC.

"Mediation in Special Education: Parents and School Systems Working Together." Available from CIC.

Meeting the Needs of Students: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—includes a comparison of the provisions of IDEA and Section 504. Available from CIC.

NICHCY Publications Catalog. Available from the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013-1492 [telephone: (800) 695-0285; (202) 884-8200] [website: www.nichcy.org] [e-mail: nichcy@aed.org].

Para los Padres de Bebés y Niños Pequeños...Un Folleto Informativo: Servicios de Intervención Temprana para Su Hijo Pequeño con Necesidades Especiales. The Spanish version of *For Parents of Florida's Infants and Toddlers: Early Intervention Services for Your Young Child with Special Needs.* Available from CIC.

Para los Padres de Estudiantes Especiales de la Florida. The Spanish version of this book. Available from CIC.

Para los Padres de Estudiantes Especiales de la Florida: Registros Educativos de los Padres. A booklet of forms that will help you keep records of your child's education. It goes with *Para los Padres de Estudiantes Especiales de la Florida.* Available from CIC.

"Summary of Procedural Safeguards for Students with Disabilities." Available in English and Spanish from the ESE office of your local school board or from CIC.

"The Sunshine State Standards and Students with Disabilities." Available from the CIC.

COLLECTIONS

Clearinghouse Information Center (CIC)—loan materials; free and at-cost materials—Florida Department of Education, 325 W. Gaines Street, Room 628 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400 [telephone: [(850) 488-1879] [fax: (850) 487-2679] [website: www.firn.edu/doe/cichome.htm] [e-mail: cicbiscs@mail.doe.state.fl.us].

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education—information packets available on particular disabilities, gifted education, inclusion, and other topics; prepackaged and customized bibliographies available—Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1589 [telephone: (800) 328-0272] [website: www.ericec.org] [e-mail: ericec@cec.sped.org].

LAWS AND RULES

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Available from CIC.

Regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Available from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20202 [telephone: (202) 205-9055]. Also available from CIC as part of *Volume I-C.* (See below.)

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Available from CIC as part of *Volume I-C.* (See below.)

Florida Educational Equity Act—Florida's civil rights protection act. Available from the Florida Department of Education, Equal Educational Opportunity Program, 325 W. Gaines St., Room 1020 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400 [telephone: (850) 488-6217] [website: www.firn.edu/doe/eeop/eeop.html].

Regulations for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—State and Local Government Services (January 1992) and **Employment.** Available from the Florida Department of Education, Equal Educational Opportunity Program, 325 W. Gaines St., Room 1020 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400 [telephone: (850) 488-6217] [website: www.firn.edu/doe/eeop/eeop.html].

Regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Available from the Florida Department of Education, Equal Educational Opportunity Program, 325 W. Gaines St., Room 1020 Turlington Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400 [telephone: (850) 488-6217] [website: www.firn.edu/doe/eeop/eeop.html]. Also available from CIC as part of *Volume I-C.* (See below.)

Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students—available for review at the ESE office of your local school district.

"Summary of Procedural Safeguards for Students with Disabilities"—pamphlet that summarizes federal and state laws on parents' rights. Available in English and Spanish from the ESE office of your local school board or from CIC.

Volume I-B: Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules: Excerpts for Special Programs. Available from CIC.

Volume I-C: Federal Laws and Regulations Pertaining to the Education of Students with Disabilities. Available from CIC.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP (DIRECTORY)

Many organizations and agencies offer information and services to parents of children with disabilities. On the next pages you will find just a few of them. Any of the groups listed will be happy to answer questions or give you information.

LOCAL

Administrator, Exceptional Student Education (Contact local school board or district office for address and telephone number.)

(Name) ______________________________
(Address) ______________________________
(Telephone Number) ______________________________

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) (Contact exceptional student education administrator for address and telephone number.)

(Name) ______________________________
(Address) ______________________________
(Telephone Number) ______________________________

Florida Department of Children and Families (Check local telephone directory for address and telephone number.)

(Name) ______________________________
(Address) ______________________________
(Telephone Number) ______________________________

Program Chairperson, Special Education or Exceptional Student Education Department at local college or university

(Name) ______________________________
(Address) ______________________________
(Telephone Number) ______________________________

STATE

Some of these organizations may have local chapters or be part of a national organization. Check your telephone directory or contact the organization directly.

The Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities
2671 Executive Center Circle, West
Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32301-5024
(850) 488-9071
Voice/TDD:
North Florida—(800) 342-0823
South Florida—(800) 350-4566 (for Spanish speakers)
web: www.advocacycenter.org

Association for Retarded Citizens—Florida
411 E. College Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(800) 226-1155
(850) 921-0460
e-mail: arcfl@supernet.net
web: www.ARCFlorida.org

Autism Society of Florida
P.O. Box 266823
Weston, FL 33326
(954) 349-2820
e-mail: lifer727@aol.com
web: www.autismfl.com

Brain Injury Association of Florida
North Broward Medical Center
201 E. Sample Road
Pompano Beach, FL 33064
(800) 992-3442
(954) 786-2400
e-mail: info@biaf.org
web: www.biaf.org

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida
2735 Whitney Road
Clearwater, FL 33760
(800) 825-5736
(727) 523-1130
e-mail: fnd@fndfl.org
web: www.fndfl.org

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST)
1020 E. Lafayette Street, Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32301-4546
(850) 487-3278
e-mail: Faast@Faast.org
web: www.faast.org

Florida Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists
P.O. Box 150127
Altamonte Springs, FL 32715-0127
(800) 243-3574
e-mail: kmg-assn@worldnet.att.net
web: www.FLasha.org

The Florida Center for Children and Youth
P. O. Box 6646
Tallahassee, FL 32314
(850) 222-7140
e-mail: center@Floridakids.com
web: www.FloridaKids.com

Florida Department of Children and Families
Developmental Services
(children with autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, mental retardation, or Prader-Willi Syndrome)
1317 Winewood Boulevard
Bulding 3, Room 325
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0700
(850) 488-4257
(888) 633-2301
web: www.state.fl.us/cf_web/ds

Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services
325 W. Gaines Street
Room 614 Turlington Building
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
(850) 488-1570
web: www.firn.edu/doe/commhome

Florida Department of Health
Children's Medical Services
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A06
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1707
(850) 245-4200
web: www9.myflorida.com/cms

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council
124 Marriott Drive, Suite 203
Tallahassee, FL 32301-2981
(850) 488-4180
(800) 850-7801
TDD: (850) 488-0956
TDD: (888) 488-8633
e-mail: FDDC@nettally.com
web: fddc.org

Florida Easter Seal Society
1040 Woodcock Rd., Suite 215
Orlando, FL 32803
(407) 896-7881
(TDD or Voice)
e-mail: info@fl.easter-seals.org
web: www.fl.easter-seals.org

Florida Families of Children with Visual Impairments (FFCVI)
(an affiliate of the National Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired)
6015 Lemon Tree Court
Tampa, FL 33625
(813) 264-0847
e-mail: ffcvi@homestead.com
web: www.ffcvi.org

Learning Disabilities Association of Florida
550 S. Eola Dr.
Orlando, FL 32801
(407) 894-0074
e-mail: ctavel@iag.net
web: www.ldafl.org

Prader-Willi Florida Association
1914 W. Carmen Street
Tampa, FL 33606
(813) 251-1259
e-mail: PWFA2000@aol.com
web: www.pwsusa.org

Spina Bifida Association
24 Beach Walker Road
Fernadina Beach, FL 32034-6600
(904) 261-6639
(800) 722-6355
e-mail: Psabadie@net-magic.net

Statewide Human Rights Advocacy Committee
1317 Winewood Boulevard
Building 1, Room 401
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0700
(850) 488-6173
(Suncom) 278-6173
web: www.state.fl.us/cf_web/hrac

Tourette Syndrome Association—Florida Chapter
P.O. Box 152043
Tampa, FL 33684-2043
(321) 783-3248
e-mail: webmaster@tsa-fl.org
web: www.tsa-fl.org

TASH-Florida Chapter
University of Florida
6806 N.W. 53rd Terrace
Gainesville, FL 32653
(352) 846-2760
e-mail: gilles@ufbi.ufl.edu
web: www.tash.org/chapters/florida.htm

United Cerebral Palsy of Florida
1830 Buford Court
Tallahassee, FL 32308
(850) 878-2141
e-mail: ucpadm@nettally.com
web: www.ucpflorida.org

NATIONAL

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf
2000 M Street, N.W.
Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 337-5220
(TDD or Voice)
web: www.agbell.org

American Association on Mental Retardation
444 N. Capital Street, N.W.
Suite 846
Washington, DC 20001-1512
(800) 424-3688
(202) 387-1968
web: www.AAMR.org

American Foundation for the Blind
11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300
New York, NY 10001
(212) 502-7600
(800) AFB-LINE
web: www.afb.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 897-5700
(800) 638-8255 (voice/TDD)
e-mail: actioncenter@asha.org
web: www.asha.org

Autism Society of America
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 300
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 657-0881
(800) 3-AUTISM
web: www.autism-society.org

Children with Attention Deficit Disorders
8181 Professional Place
Suite 201
Landover, MD 20785
(301) 306-7070, ext. 100
1-800-233-4050
e-mail: call_center1@chadd.org
web: www.chadd.org

Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 628-8787
(800) 233-1200
e-mail: cdfinfo@childrensdefense.org
web: www.childrensdefense.org

Council for Exceptional Children
1110 N. Glebe Rd.
Arlington, VA 22201-5704
(703) 264-9474
(888) 232-7733
e-mail: service@cec.sped.org
web: www.cec.sped.org

Disability Resources
(information for independent living)
Four Glatter Lane
Centereach, NY 11720
(516) 585-0290
e-mail: info@disabilityresources.org
web: www.disabilityresources.org

Federation for Children with Special Needs
1135 Treemount Street, Suite 420
Boston, MA 02120
(617) 236-7210
e-mail: FCSNinfo@fcsn.org
web: www.fcsn.org

International Dyslexia Association
8600 Lasalle Road
Chester Building, Suite 382
Baltimore, MD 21286
(410) 296-0232
(800) 222-3123
e-mail: info@interdys.org
web: www.interdys.org

International Parents' Organization (IPO)
3417 Volta Place, NW
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 337-5220
(voice/TDD)

John Tracy Clinic
(children under six with hearing impairments)
806 W. Adams Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90007
(213) 748-5481
TDD: (213) 747-2924
(800) 522-4582 (voice/TDD)
e-mail:cmacallister@Johntracyclinic.org
web: www.johntracyclinic.org/

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
(412) 341-1515
(888)300-6710
e-mail: ldanatl@usaor.net
web: ldaamerica.org

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
Colonial Place Three
2107 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 3000
Arlington, VA 22201-3042
(703) 524-7600
(800) 950-6264
e-mail: helpline@nami.org
web: www.nami.org

National Association for Gifted Children
1707 L. Street, NW, Suite 550
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785-4268
e-mail: nagc@nagc.org
web: www.NAGC.org

National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments
P.O. Box 317
Watertown, MA 02471-0317
(617) 972-7441
(800) 562-6265
e-mail: NAPVI@perkins.pvt.k12.ma.us
web: www.spedex.com/NAPVI

National Association of the Deaf (NAD)
814 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 587-1788 (Voice)
(301) 587-1789 (TDD)
e-mail: sales@NAD.org
web: www.nad.policy.net

National Easter Seal Society
230 W. Monroe Street, Suite 1800
Chicago, IL 60606-4802
(312) 726-6200
(312) 726-4258 (TDD)
(800) 221-6827 (voice)
web: www.easter-seals.org

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)
Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013
(202) 884-8200
(800) 695-0285 (voice/TDD)
e-mail: nichcy@aed.org
www.nichcy.org

Office of Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
61 Forsythe Street, Suite 19T70
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 562-6350

Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 205-9055 (or 5507)
web: www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP

Prader-Willi Syndrome Association
5700 Midnight Pass Road
Sarasota, FL 34242
(800) 926-4797
(941) 312-0400
e-mail: pwsausa@aol.com
web: www.pswausa.org

Spina Bifida Association of America
4590 MacArthur Boulevard, N.W.
Suite 250
Washington, DC 20007-4226
e-mail: sbaa@sbaa.org
web: www.sbaa.org

TASH—Disability Advocacy Worldwide
(focuses on inclusion and civil rights)
29 W. Susquehanna Avenue, Suite 210
Baltimore, MD 21204
(410) 828-8274 (Voice)
(410) 828-1306 (TDD)
e-mail: info@tash.org
web: www.tash.org

United Cerebral Palsy
1660 L Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
web: www.ucp.org

GROUPS THAT YOU HAVE FOUND HELPFUL

Name and Address	Telephone Number

SAMPLE LETTERS

The Sample Letters that follow can help you take the actions described in **chapter 4**.

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SAMPLE LETTER—ASKING FOR AN INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION*

(Your Address)
(Your Phone Number)
(Today's Date)

Mr./Ms. ____________________
Principal
(Name of School)
(Address of School)

Dear ________________________ :

I am the parent of ______________________________ , age ________ , who is a student in grade __________ at ____________________________ School. I have reason to believe that my child has special needs that are not being met by his/her current school program. Please arrange to have my child evaluated as quickly as possible, so that appropriate services can be provided.

Please let me know when this evaluation will take place.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

cc: Administrator, Exceptional Student Education

This Letter May Be Handwritten

---

*Adapted from *Education for All: A Training Module for Parents and Advocates of Handicapped Children*, South Carolina Protection and Advocacy Training and Technical Assistance Project.

SAMPLE LETTER—ASKING FOR AN IEP REVIEW MEETING*

(Your Address)
(Your Phone Number)
(Today's Date)

Mr./Ms. ____________________
Principal (or Counselor)
(Name of School)
(Address of School)

Dear _______________________ :

I am the parent of _____________________________ , age ____ , who is a student in grade _____ at __________________________ School. I think that there should be a change in my child's individual educational plan. I am asking for a meeting to talk about this and to write a new IEP.

Please let me know when the meeting will be held.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

cc: Principal of School

This Letter May Be Handwritten

---

*Adapted from *Education for All: A Training Module for Parents and Advocates of Handicapped Children*, South Carolina Protection and Advocacy Training and Technical Assistance Project.

SAMPLE LETTER—ASKING THE SCHOOL TO CHANGE A DECISION

(Your Address)
(Your Phone Number)
(Today's Date)

Mr./Ms. ____________________
Administrator, Exceptional Student Education
(Name of School Board)
(Address of School Board Office)

Dear ______________________ :

I am the parent of ____________________________ , age _______ , who is a student in grade _____ at ______________________ School. I got a notice from the school on ___(date)___ about ____
____.

I do not agree with this notice. I have talked with the people at the school. I am asking for a meeting to talk about this.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

cc: Principal of School

This Letter May Be Handwritten

SAMPLE LETTER—ASKING FOR AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

(Your Address)
(Your Phone Number)
(Today's Date)

Mr./Ms. ____________________
Administrator, Exceptional Student Education
(Name of School District)
(Address of School Board District)

Dear ______________________ :

I am the parent of ____________________________ , age _______ , who is a student in grade _____ at ___________________ School. I think that my child needs an independent educational evaluation because of these problems with the evaluation done by the school: ____
____
____

I am asking that you help me find someone to do this evaluation and that the school system pay for it.

Please notify me of your answer to this request.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

cc: Principal of School

This Letter May Be Handwritten

SAMPLE LETTER—
ASKING THE SCHOOL TO CHANGE RECORDS

(Your Address)
(Your Phone Number)
(Today's Date)

Mr./Ms. ____________________
Principal
(Name of School)
(Address of School)

Dear ______________________ :

I am the parent of ____ , age ______ , who is a student in grade ___ at _______________________ School. I have read the school records about my child. These records were explained to me by ___(name of person)___ on ___(date)___ . I have reason to believe that part of the school records are not fair to my child. Therefore, I am asking that you ____
____
____.

Please let me know what action you will take in answer to this request.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

cc: Administrator, Exceptional Student Education

This Letter May Be Handwritten

SAMPLE FORM—ASKING FOR A DUE PROCESS HEARING

(first of two pages)

Date of Request ______________________ District ___________________________

Student's Name ___________________________ Date of Birth _________________

Student's Current School ____

Parent's Name ____

Address of Student ____

Home Phone ___________________ Parent's Business Phone __________________

Name of Person Completing This Form (if other than parent) _______________________

Address ____

Phone Number _______________________

As provided under the procedural safeguards section of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), I am requesting a due process hearing for the following reasons:

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

A due process hearing would not be necessary if the district would do the following:

____

____

____

____

____

____

Another possible solution would be:

____

____

____

____

____

____

I understand that I have the right to participate in mediation to try to resolve my dispute with the school district. I understand that mediation is voluntary on the part of parent and school district, is not used to deny or delay a parent's right to a due process hearing, is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator, and is free for parents.

____I would like to participate in mediation in order to resolve this dispute.

____I do not wish to participate in mediation.

________________________ ________________________

Signature Date

Return completed form to the superintendent of your local school district.

SAMPLE LETTER—FILING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

(Your Address)
(Your Phone Number)
(Today's Date)

Mr./Ms. ____________________
Chief, Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services
Florida Department of Education
325 W. Gaines St., Room 614
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

Dear _______________________ :

I am the parent of _____________________________ , age _______ , who is a student in grade _____ at_________________ School. I wish to file a formal complaint against the __________________ school district. I believe that the school district has violated the law in the following way: ____

____.

Please let me know as soon as possible what I should do next.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

cc: Superintendent, ______________ School District

This Letter May Be Handwritten

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

NOTES

Use these pages to list questions or topics you want to discuss at meetings or visits.

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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